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JEFF LEAPED WITH ALL HIS MIGHT. — *Page 305.*

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STORIES OF THE TRIANGULAR LEAGUE

AT THE HOME PLATE

BY

ALBERTUS T. DUDLEY

AUTHOR OF "PHILLIPS EXETER SERIES"

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES COPELAND

BOSTON

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CHAPTER I

THE SMART OF DEFEAT

A TRIO of lads, wearing the colors of the Newbury Latin School, were leaning disconsolately over the iron railing that tops the Charles River wall, staring down at the sloppy float of the boathouse. The crews, victors and vanquished, had disappeared with their boats within the quarters, but the Westcott following, though they had passed the cheering stage, still remained in jubilant converse on the float.

"Only third place, after all!" sighed the middle member of the trio, a tall, lean-faced boy who wore his panama, with the Newbury baseball hatband, pushed well back from his forehead. "And they've been cracking up our crew as the best on the river. I wonder what the trouble was."

"Too much beef," volunteered Saunders, who

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usually knew exactly what the trouble was with everything. "Big fellows like Firman and Thorne are hard to keep in form, and don't pull their weight."

"If Russell Thorne doesn't pull his weight, I don't know who does!" returned Ray, with a grunt of contempt for his companion's opinion.

"Oh, I don't mean that he really can't pull his weight," Saunders made haste to explain, in vindication of his character as athletic expert. "He can't pull as much in proportion as some lighter man, and a clumsy fellow like him is bound to interfere with the motion of the boat."

"Too bad the coach didn't know that," remarked Ray, dryly.

"Coaches aren't always right," protested Saunders, firing up at the slur. "Look at the college crews! Harvard doesn't have football men in the varsity boat any longer, and the Cornell crew, which has the best coach in the country, is always light. You see —"

"Don't bother to give us a lecture on rowing, Sandy, for heaven's sake!" interrupted Ray. "We'll take your word for it. What difference does it make now, anyway? We've lost the race,

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and Westcott's has got the cup." He paused for an instant and then added mournfully, "And we were so dead sure of it!"

The third member of the group had thus far taken no part in the discussion. Perrin was neither an athlete like Henderson Ray, nor an omniscient patron of sport like Saunders. He lacked the physical endowment of the former and the mental shallowness of the latter. As one of the most faithful students in his class and hopelessly unathletic, he might easily have won the reputation of a "grind" and a "Willie boy," had he not possessed other qualities which in his schoolmates' eyes offset his bookishness. He was modest, universally friendly, interested in all that touched the life of the school, and wise enough to keep his best thoughts for those who could appreciate them.

"It would make a good deal of difference if we could really find out what the matter is," said Perrin. "We had a good chance to win the cup this year and lost it. It will be up to our class to change things next year. In football and baseball we shall have as good a show as either Westcott's or Trowbridge. We should be sure of the cup with those two, even if the crew were beaten."

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"We'll never have as good a chance for the crew again," sighed Ray. "When Crusty Richards shut Fullerton off from rowing, he killed the crew."

"It was Fullerton's own fault. Why didn't he study?"

"How could he do anything, with a man like Crusty down on him! It's just like Crusty to black-list a good athlete. It gives him a chance to get off something about the proper subordination of sport to study, and moral victories, and all that rot."

"He voted to give the crew a holiday yesterday, didn't he?" asked Perrin, throwing a sly glance at Ray's clouded face. "I suppose you charge it up against him that the fellows got their arms sunburned down at Cohasset and didn't sleep last night."

"That was John Smith's scheme," put in Saunders, seizing the opportunity to throw in a bit of information. "Smith worked Morgan and the faculty for the holiday; it was Downs who let the fellows sit round in the sun with bare arms. He ought to have known better."

"That Smith makes me tired!" ejaculated Ray. "He's queered the school in the eyes of all decent people with his antics as president of

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the League, and frightened off the alumni who would really be of use to us. Why can't he let us alone!"

Saunders opened his eyes wide at this sentiment, which in his expert opinion was both unorthodox and disloyal. He opened his mouth, too, to set the ball-player right, but Perrin got ahead of him.

"That's where your head is level, Henny!" he exclaimed. "If we can't have the best of the alumni to help us, let's run our own affairs. I hope you'll stick to that policy when the baseball comes round again."

"I'm going to try to," said Ray, turning away from the railing. "It's all over; let's get out of this!"

Halfway to the bridge, they overtook two fellows of the first class — Newbold, captain of the last football team, and his shadow, Fritz Shaefer.

"Great race!" sang out Newbold, sarcastically.

Perrin and Ray nodded and mustered feeble smiles, but made no response. Saunders burned for a discussion.

"What happened, do you think?" he asked eagerly. "Was the crew too heavy?"

"They got tired," remarked Newbold.

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"They had a Jonah on board," added Shaefer.

"I call it a whale — two whales!" cried Saunders, and chuckled loudly at his own wit. "That's what I've been telling these fellows. Thorne and Firman don't belong on a crew. They're too big and clumsy."

"I didn't expect anything different, so I'm not disappointed," Newbold answered. "I learned my lesson about Thorne last fall. — Oh, by the way, I've got some news you'll be interested in. Crusty Richards is going to put a brother of his into the second class next year."

"What of it?" asked Perrin, calmly.

"What of it?" Newbold repeated in surprise. "Do you want a young Crusty hanging round the corridors, picking up everything he hears about everybody, and running with it to the old man?"

"How do you know he'll do that?"

"Because he's Crusty's brother, you gink! Whether he does it or not, everybody'll think he does. What a chance you fellows will have! I wouldn't be in that kid's shoes for money!"

Ray signalled the car which was sliding swiftly down upon them. Saunders edged up to Newbold's side.

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"Are the first going to have any fun at the end of the term?" he asked with greedy eyes.

Newbold's smile was full of mysterious promise. "I don't think we shall graduate without leaving our mark upon the school."

Whereat Saunders snickered, partly in appreciation of the pun, partly with joy at feeling himself the confidant of the great.

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CHAPTER II

INTRODUCING CRUSTY

Mr. Charles Henry Richards, curtly and disrespectfully spoken of as Crusty, sat in his recitation-room late in the afternoon finishing a batch of examination papers. Mr. Richards was a conscientious and exact person, who never put off till to-morrow what should be done to-day. He had been conscientious and exact all the twenty-eight years of his life, or at least during all the years of which he still retained the memory. On the strength of these qualities he had worked his way through college, alien to the life about him and making no friends but those of his own kind. He had taken up teaching because to a man of his studious tastes it seemed the most natural occupation to pursue, and because his family needed the advantage of immediate earnings. As a teacher he was honest, faithful, methodical, accurate — but with a starved imagination and sympathies hidebound by prejudice.

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To Mr. Richards the marking of examinations was a very serious matter. He was not one of those easy-going schoolmasters who glance through a paper, mark it off-hand sixty or eighty, and let it go at that. Mr. Richards was far too conscientious for such a slovenly course. He divided his examination into sections; then he read the whole set of papers through with reference to the first section, and noted his estimate of the value of the work opposite each boy's name; this good beginning made, he went over the papers again to assign credits on the second section, and repeated the process as many times as there were divisions in the examination. At the end, he had only to add up the several columns to obtain a set of absolutely accurate and unprejudiced marks. The merit of certain sections of a paper could not blind him to the faults of others; 67.48 was always recorded as 67, while 67.52 regularly yielded 68. The system was laborious, but perfect.

At five o'clock Mr. Richards was still two sections from the end of his work. He had closed his windows to keep out the sound of hammering in a house beyond the school yard; the "goodies" had laid aside their brooms and departed. Silence

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brooded over the corridors and recitation-rooms,—the silence of emptiness, more noticeable because of the contrast which it offered to the all-pervading animation of working hours. Suddenly the teacher laid down his blue pencil and tiptoed out into the hall. He had heard a sound like a footfall in the attic above him.

The attic stairs were in their usual position, hoisted high out of reach. The padlock which held the hasp of the trap-door hung secure on its staple. Mr. Richards listened intently for some seconds.

"Birds on the roof, I suppose," he concluded, as he turned back into his own room. "Sounds in an unoccupied building are strangely deceitful."

He sat down again to his task, but he had hardly recorded two credits on section eleven when he was again disturbed, this time by a thump above his head, followed by two vaguer but unmistakable jars.

The man at the desk squared his shoulders and thought hard, his face tense with indignation, his eye glittering with eagerness to perform his full duty to any unpleasant extent. Mischief was evidently going on in the attic, perhaps some

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foolish business with a class flag, or — no, the batteries, the wires connecting the master clock with the automatic gong that sounded for recitation periods — that was what they were after! He must act quickly if he would intercept the vandals.

The janitor was refreshing his soul after the racking strain of a day spent in pretending to be busy. His chair was tipped back against a pillar near the open door of the basement, his teeth gripped the old black pipe freshly filled from a plug equally black; spread out on his knees lay the afternoon edition, a pictured feast of crime, scandal, and advice to the lovelorn. The janitor's features were incapable of expression, but his attitude fairly grunted contentment.

"Willis!" cried Mr. Richards, bursting into view from the direction of the stairs. "There's some one in the attic."

The two suspended chair-legs came slowly down to the concrete floor, while over his spectacles Willis glared at the intruder upon his peace. "That can't be," he said gruffly. "The steps are up, and I've got the key to the padlock in my pocket."

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"It can be, and it is," returned the teacher, sharply. "I heard the noise distinctly."

"How could they get up there if the trap is locked?" demanded Willis.

"I don't know how they got there. It is enough that they *are* there. I want you to come at once and let me into the attic."

"You prob'ly heard somethin' else, — rats, most likely."

"Are you coming or not?" The tone was peremptory.

"Oh, I'll come if I must, but the' ain't no one there."

Sourly Willis laid aside pipe and paper, and shuffled away for the step-ladder. He required time to labor up three flights of stairs — and his tread was by no means catlike. He required more time — accompanied by noise — to scrape the step-ladder into position, to pull down the stairs, to find the key in his trousers pocket, to free the padlock from the hasp. When at last the trap swung back, Mr. Richards brushed impetuously by the loitering janitor and swung himself into the attic.

Willis pushed slowly up behind him. "It's just

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as I said," he proclaimed, as he projected head and shoulders into the semi-obscurity of the loft. "The' ain't no one — "

He was interrupted in his complacent assertion by the sight of a paint-brush lying near a post not two yards from his nose. It was evident that the paint-brush had not brought itself to the attic. Some one must have brought it. Some one had been in the attic after all! The discovery was humiliating to Jeremiah Willis; he sat down on the edge of the opening to consider it.

Meantime Mr. Richards, who had perceived the brush at one glance and the open skylight at another, was climbing the ladder to the roof with all the speed consistent with safety. He arrived at the top just in season to behold, at the far side of the grounds, tailing out like the finishers in a long race, the forms of three boys sprinting for shelter.

"Newbold, Shaefer, Jack Graham!" the teacher checked them off with the satisfaction of a sportsman counting birds in his game-bag. The wicked had come to grief. He held the miscreants in the hollow of his hand!

The damage done proved inconsiderable: the

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numerals of the first class daubed on the chimney, with the beginnings of "Good-by, Newbury"; a satirical phrase left on the timbers of the attic. The visitors had mounted by the fire-escape and the cornices, a daredevil trip worthy of a heroic fireman. Willis shook his head helplessly over the unfair advantage taken of the open skylight. Mr. Richards's face assumed a sterner aspect as he considered the probability that Jack Graham, a second class boy, one of his own flock, had been a leader in the enterprise. It was like his daring impudence. Newbold and Shaefer surely lacked the necessary boldness and originality. Respect for authority was evidently at a low ebb in school when a boy who had still another year before him became a leader in vandalism in broad daylight!

"I doubt if he has another year in this school," murmured the teacher, grimly, as he took up once more his interrupted work.

The papers were finished in unprecedented haste. It is possible that some of Mr. Richards's estimates on section twelve were a point above or below the strict line of justice. In adding up Jack Graham's credits, he actually made the mistake of

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JUST IN SEASON TO BEHOLD THE FORM OF THREE BOYS SPRINTING FOR SHELTER — PAGE 11.

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giving him 84.7, when the figures warranted only 82.9. Neither master nor boys ever knew of this error; if the fact had transpired, it is safe to say that the boys would have been far less troubled by it than the master. After copying the marks neatly into his class book, Mr. Richards called at Dr. Morgan's and spent an hour with the head-master. He came out wearing the expression of pained disappointment with which he often listened to poor recitations.

The next morning the three culprits perceived that their suspicions were well founded. They read detection in Mr. Richards's face; they argued it directly from the evidence of his eye when it rested on them, from the deliberate, cutting tone which he used in speaking to them. All day long they expected the thunderbolt to strike. They felt at night like criminals found guilty by the jury and remanded to jail to await sentence on the morrow. The next day brought no relief to the tension. Newbold and Shaefer showed their fright badly; Graham, though inwardly ashamed at the thought of the daubs of paint on the school-house chimney, carried his head high and smiled in the face of danger.

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The third day passed with the suspense unbroken. The whole upper school now shared the anxiety of the leaders.

"I don't care a rap about the other two," said Russell Thorne to a knot of second class fellows on the way down Birch Lane. "They'll get what they deserve. But if Jack Graham has to leave school, it will kill next year's football team. There'll be no one at all in the back-field."

"It's bound to cripple the nine," added Ray. "He's the only sure hitter we ever had in school. I wonder how long this strain is going to be kept up."

"They're holding off for effect," opined Lincoln Rosell; "they want to make us worry about it."

"They're holding off to keep us quiet." This remark by Perrin proved that his brains were available for other uses than the gaining of high marks.

"If Crusty fires Jack, I'll never forgive him!" said Thorne.

Perrin laughed mockingly. "What an awful threat! Poor Crusty! How can he stand it!"

"We can take it out of young Crusty, anyway," suggested Lincoln.

"No, you can't. It wouldn't be a square deal

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to punish young Crusty for old Crusty's faults. Besides, Crusty is only doing his duty."

"He likes his duty too well."

"They say Jack was responsible for the whole thing. If that's so, he's a bigger fool than I ever took him for. What interest did he have in painting up numerals for the first class?"

"It wasn't just that," Thorne explained. "Jack won't say much about it, but I got some of the story out of him last night when I put it to him that he was playing false with the football team. Newbold and Shaefer asked him how they could get up to the chimney, and he offered to take them up. He didn't think anything about the painting; he was just carried away by the excitement of the climb."

"Pulled them up from the fire-escape with a rope, didn't he?" asked Ray.

"Yes, and he had to let them down with the rope, too, when they skipped. That's what made 'em so slow in getting away."

"Perhaps Crusty is going to overlook it," suggested Perrin.

"Overlook it!" exclaimed Thorne in derision. "Don't get it into your head that Crusty's going

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to overlook anything. He isn't made that way."

More days of waiting dragged by. The two offenders of the first class were haggard with the long struggle between hope and fear. The second class, grown tired of guessing, had settled down to a pessimistic view. The year of reverses in athletics was to reach its climax in the loss of Jack Graham. Jack himself still pretended indifference, but his show of bravery came hard.

Then, on the eve of the close of school, Dr. Morgan called the first class into his room, and by a speech barely three minutes long, drove every cloud from the sky. It had happened in recent years, he said, that certain members of the graduating class, in their regret at leaving school, had tried to ease their grief on the night after commencement by painting some memorial of themselves on the bricks of the basement or on the fences. The performers had always shown a commendable restraint in their wrong-doing. No damage had ever been done that could not be obliterated by a few hours' work, but the custom was an objectionable one and should be discontinued. He therefore requested the class before

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him to use their combined influence to put a stop to the practice. He felt obliged to add, moreover, that for any failure to comply with his request, Newbold, Shaefer, and Graham would, for a sufficient reason, be held accountable.

The class filed out of the room, scarce believing the testimony of their ears. Had the decision been reached with Crusty's consent or without it? Opinions on this point differed, but there was no divergence in sentiment as to the absolute desirability of complying with Dr. Morgan's request. The nearest approach to a break in this harmony was due to a couple of wags who in the next twenty-four hours started various rumors of dark plans afoot, merely for the pleasure of watching the frantic efforts of Newbold and Shaefer to avert the imaginary peril.

And here belongs an odd circumstance which is significant of Jack Graham's character. When the clouds had lifted, the reckless Jack went to Dr. Morgan and offered an apology for his part in the adventure of the roof. Newbold and Shaefer never peeped.

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CHAPTER III

AN UNHEROIC RESCUE

THORNE came running up the steps, on the opening day of the fall term, with but five minutes to spare before the gong sounded. He was met at the door by Firman and Graham.

"My train was late," he sputtered. "I wanted to attend to a lot of things before school. You fellows brought your football clothes, I hope."

"I brought mine," said Firman.

"I left some here last year," declared Graham. "They must be here now, unless Willis has sold 'em, or the moths chewed 'em up. — Have you found a coach?"

"Yes, Jim Rhodes. I wanted Bennett, but he's got a job in New York. I think Rhodes will do pretty well. He only made the second eleven in college, but he knows a pile about the game, and will work hard for the school."

Graham looked disappointed. "Bennett knows

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how to kick. We've got to develop a punter this year."

"We'll find some one. We're no worse off than Westcott's, anyway. They've lost Pete Talbot."

"John Smith asked me about you yesterday. He wants to see you about the football," announced Graham, watching Thorne closely to see what impression the news made.

John Smith was an energetic Newbury graduate, possessed by an uncontrollable itching to guide the athletic affairs of the school. At present he held the exalted office of president of the Triangular League, which, as readers of "The School Four" already know, was formed for a series of competitions in football, baseball, and rowing between three schools — Westcott's, Trowbridge, and Newbury. The emblem of victory, a silver cup, which was held each year by the school that had won the majority of contests was now in the possession of Westcott's.

"I don't want to see him," answered Thorne, emphatically. "He made us ridiculous last year, trying to run us as a side-show to his circus. The farther he'll keep away, the better I'd like it."

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"Don't you want all the help you can get?" asked Graham.

"All the real help, yes. I'm not going to take advice from every fence-loafer."

Perrin and Saunders pushed their way to the front through a cluster of small boys who were watching the school leaders with respectful eyes.

"Who are you stepping on, Gus Perrin?" called out the indignant voice of Winnie Thorne, who as brother of the captain of the eleven felt it his duty to play advocate for his affronted comrades.

Perrin threw back a smile of amusement at the frowning face. "Nothing of any account. I hope I didn't hurt you?"

"It 'ud take more than you to do that!" retorted Winnie. For the space of ten seconds his classmates buzzed their approval of this manful protest against tyranny. Then Freddy Danvers strolled up, wearing his first pair of long trousers, and looking at the same time very sheepish and defiantly indifferent. His arrival introduced among the fourth class a far more interesting topic of conversation than the defence of their just rights as free citizens of the school republic.

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Saunders was shaking hands vehemently and shooting out disconnected items of football gossip. Suddenly he interrupted himself to exclaim, in a louder tone, "Young Crusty's here!"

"What's he like?" demanded Graham.

"A baby-faced chump, fat as butter."

"We'll take the fat off him, if he doesn't walk straight!"

"Oh, he's harmless," said Perrin. "I've seen him. He's just a young edition of his brother, broad and round."

"Football?" asked Thorne, just as the gong clanged.

Perrin looked doubtful. "I don't think he's that kind," he said, as he went up the stairs toward the chapel, at Thorne's side. "Mr. Haven says he's a fine scholar — he's got eight points for Harvard already with two B's. He'll probably be doing lessons for half the second class before a month's gone."

Thorne growled something unflattering under his breath.

"That's it — just like me!" Perrin's tone relieved the words of half their morbid sound. "No good in anything except studies."

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"If he's like you, he's good in everything except athletics," answered his friend, cordially.

At recess the older boys flocked out to the playground, where the indolent looked on while their energetic comrades kicked a couple of footballs to and fro across the yard. Squads of smaller lads romped on the steep slope close to the schoolhouse, an earthwork which was daily the scene of fierce assault and gallant defence. But the fourth class, the most lively and enterprising of all the lower school, came not forth. They had plans of their own which detained them in the basement playrooms — plans which for a considerable time gave no promise of fulfilment. Freddy Danvers wouldn't come down. To all subtly worded messages, Freddy answered with an appreciative grin that he didn't want any recess; he was to have luncheon at home after school. Finally Joe McPhail, a lank urchin who had shown himself Freddy's friend in days gone by, brought word that they were calling the absentee a squealer, and advised him to have the ordeal over at once, promising to stand by him and save him from the worst. Whereat Freddy, understanding well that the discomfort of the operation, like the agony of

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the dentist's chair, would only be made worse by an attempt to escape it, plucked up courage and descended.

A gentle company of loving friends were waiting for him beyond the turn of the passage that leads to the gymnasium. They leaped upon him like wolves, dragged him, squealing and struggling, into the seclusion of the gymnasium, where, in a trice, they had twitched off his shoes and laid violent hands on the bright new socks, emblem of ambition and pride. At this juncture Joe created a diversion by a wild charge into the pack, but he was soon detached and kept engaged by a detail, while the main body attended to the business of the hour.

It was about this time that Young Crusty (properly named Jefferson Richards), as he wandered aimless and friendless about the building, wondering if all new boys were treated with such contemptuous coldness, happened to stroll down the passage. The sound of scuffling and subdued ejaculations drew him to the door of the gymnasium. On one side a youngster of thin legs and long skinny arms wrestled hopelessly against three determined assailants. In the centre a horde of

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grinning kobolds held in their midst the writhing body of a boy fighting fiercely to keep his socks on his feet. Richards beheld weakness brutally assailed, and dived at the crowd.

Close behind the newcomer another older boy hurried toward the scene of riot. Thorne, who had been flitting to and fro on football affairs, had heard the sounds, and, guessing what was on foot, came with a grin of anticipation on his face to "see the kids scrap." What he saw was something unexpected — a heavy-shouldered, strong-limbed fellow furrowing the swarm of urchins as a plough cuts the soft loam, gathering up on the way the distressed victim and planting him on his feet at the farther side of the room. There he turned, as the imps with a yell rushed upon him, threw off two with a sweep of his right arm, and two again with his left, grasped two more by their coat collars and walked them before him straight through the heart of the mob. After that the fourth class withdrew from the contest, and lifted up their voices in abuse.

The lay observer would perhaps have seen no more than this in the scene described, but Thorne's eye was more practised. He noted the rugged

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muscles over which the coat sleeve moulded itself as the rescuer's arm was flung backward, and the solid thigh that rounded beneath the trouser-leg; he marked with admiration the springlike start of the boy's movement, and the secure way in which he carried his weight before him as he bucked the crowd.

"And Saunders calls him fat!" he exclaimed to himself as he drew back out of sight to hear the inevitable dialogue. "Trust Sandy to get things wrong!"

"Why don't you give him a show?" asked Richards, calmly, as he faced the glowering lines.

Freddy, lacing his shoes in the shelter of his rampart, screwed his features into a taunting grimace.

"What are you butting in for?" Winnie Thorne flung out. "It ain't any of your business!"

"You don't expect me to stand by and see one boy pulled to pieces by twenty, do you?"

"We weren't hurting him any," sang out a lad on the outskirts. "It was all fooling; we were just celebrating the long pants."

"You haven't any right to knock us fellows round like that," pursued Winnie, indignantly.

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"I'd just like to see you try it on with the big fellows!"

"He wouldn't dare do it with any one of his size!"

"Not much, he'd rather fight kids!"

"He's just a big coward!"

Richards looked about him with reddening face as the insulting charges piled up. He didn't know how to defend himself against such stinging gnats. He began to feel, too, a kind of remorse; he certainly was not a fair antagonist for one of these infants. He had acted with excellent intentions, but the situation into which he had plunged was anything but agreeable. Even the lad on whose behalf he had intervened was now snickering among his classmates, apparently sharing their views and enjoying the assaults.

"Lucky for you my brother isn't here," shrilled Winnie, gathering courage at sight of the enemy's confusion. "He'd put a few dents in that ugly mug of yours."

The summons of the gong rang through the basement; at the same time Russell Thorne slipped out of concealment.

"Your brother *is* here," he said, giving the

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younger member of his family a fiercely threatening look; "and if I hear of your shooting off any more of this fresh talk, I'll spank you. You hear? — Get out!"

The youngsters fled before him. Russell turned to Richards. "It doesn't do any good to get mixed up with the kids. Let 'em settle their own rows."

"I thought one of 'em was getting badly used."

"Freddy Danvers? He can stand it. Tomorrow some other boy will be the victim, and Freddy will be leading the crowd against him. — You're coming out for football, aren't you?"

Richards hesitated. "I don't believe so. My brother thinks I ought to devote myself to study."

"It's only six weeks," began Thorne, prepared to argue the point, — but Richards, suddenly perceiving that the basement was deserted, had hurried away toward the stairs.

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CHAPTER IV

A CAPTAIN'S TROUBLES

THAT afternoon President John Smith of the Triangular League hove in sight as the short practice drew near its close. Rhodes had supervised the men while they took turns in embracing the dummy, and clutching the ball rolled past them on the ground. He was now giving the line men elementary instruction in blocking and breaking through. Thorne was busy in a corner of the school yard with a handful of green recruits, at the same time keeping his eye on the candidates for the back-field, who were punting to each other in the adjoining open space. They were a mediocre set; not one got any lift or distance into his kick. Jack Graham possessed the length of limb from which good kicking may be expected, but Jack either wouldn't kick or was persuaded that he couldn't, and no other player was physically equal to the task.

Jack Graham had to be handled with care. He

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was a fast, hard player, splendid on end runs, ready to spend his heart's blood in a cause which appealed to him, but mulishly obstinate when the spell of rebellion was upon him. Such spells, it is but fair to add, were rare, and when they came, seemed like the manifestation of another personality working to the surface. The everyday Jack was an energetic, impulsive, warm-hearted fellow, who would divide with an unfortunate his last dollar, or risk his neck on a generous inspiration. Thorne anticipated no trouble from Jack Graham, but he was too shrewd to insist on making a punter of him against his will.

There were two, at least, in the scattering of spectators at the edge of the field who appreciated quite as fully as the captain the weakness of the kicking. Jeff Richards leaned against the big elm that shades the end of the schoolhouse, and watched alternately the training of the line and the efforts of the backs as they hammered the ball to and fro. Jeff had meant to keep away from the playground; there was no place in his brother's plans concerning him for any dissipation of energy in the pursuit of athletics. He was to devote himself wholly to his school work, to an-

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ticipate two freshman courses while still in school, to win if possible the Bankart prize for general excellence,—at any rate, to lay such a solid foundation in preparatory work that he could not fail in the competition for high scholarships in college. Mr. Richards's plans involved much sacrifice on his own part; the boy were ungrateful indeed if he would not bear his share.

And Jeff meant to bear his share, though he did not yet know how heavy that share was to be. He had drifted back to the playground that afternoon just to see how things were done in an athletic school. He was curious to compare the standard with that of the country academy where he had played football and baseball with the crowd, with no fear of neglecting studies or losing class rank. He expected to witness an exhibition of skill that would give wholesome check to his selfish yearning. The actual performance set him gaping with bewilderment.

"Why, Long Jim Walters could give those fellows a dozen yards on a kick and in ten tries have them behind their goal-line!" he confided to his astonished self. "Do they call that kicking?"

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Evidently not, for Thorne himself now came up the field and tried to coax some degree of effectiveness into the feeble leg-swings. The captain's punts carried better, but evidently because he was stronger, not because of superior skill.

"What they need is three months with Jim Walters," thought the observer under the elm tree.

His own three months with Jim Walters, Jeff recalled as quite the pleasantest experience of his seventeen uneventful years. On every fair day during the autumn, Jim and he had spent their recess in a punting duel with Jim's round-ended ball. During the first weeks Jim had indulged in many facetious comments on the one-sided character of the contest, accompanied by occasional practical hints, and illustrated by long kicks over his opponent's head. Towards mid-season the expert had grown more chary of counsel, and the game less one-sided. The last week before snow flew saw Jim crowded back upon his goal-line, kicking away in dogged silence and trusting to the recess bell to save him from defeat. To fleering critics Jim averred that his leg was lame. It may have been so.

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Benny Saunders was chirping in John Smith's ear, enchanted with the privilege of discoursing to so distinguished a listener. He was charged with information, needing only a contact to yield a continuous current. Yes, Rhodes was to do the coaching alone. No, there was no new policy to be followed, as far as he knew. A fair line, but no backs except Jack, and no punters at all. Thorne would have to drop back from the line to do the kicking — at least, that was his opinion. Newbold and Hexam did the punting last year; both had graduated. New material to be got out? None at all. Only one new fellow of any size — the brother of a teacher, but no good for football; he had recognized that at the first glance. The outlook certainly couldn't be called rosy. Yes, a good coach might make something of the team, but he hadn't any great expectations from Rhodes. Thorne was too bull-headed — thought he knew it all and didn't want any advice.

So the information gushed forth in a jerky but unfailing stream. Mr. Smith left it still gushing when, at the end of the practice, he bolted down the slope to the playground. He intercepted Thorne on the farther side.

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"How is it going?" he asked, offering his hand cordially.

"Not as well as I should like," answered the captain, "but you can't tell much about things the first day out."

"There's nothing we graduates can do to help, is there? I want to see you win this year."

Thorne shook his head. "Not unless you can give us a couple of all-American backs. We have nothing at all behind the line except Jack."

"That's too bad," said Smith; "I was thinking we might help you organize your coaching force so that you could get more out of your men. You know the system that works so well at Yale. The captain of last year's team usually acts as field coach, and he brings in what graduates he sees fit, to help in details. We might do the same thing here. Newbold, as captain of last year's team, would naturally be first assistant, and I have friends who are old football men whom I could get to come out frequently and give you points."

"We've got a coach," said Thorne, shortly.

"Yes, I know. Rhodes is a good fellow and means well, but it's too big a job for one man to handle. He could plan the game. Newbold

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could look out for the backs and see to the kicking, — the punting to-day was absolutely yellow, — and some one else could take charge of the men in the line. That would furnish what we have always lacked here — a system."

He paused to give his auditor an opportunity to assent, but Thorne's lips remained closed.

"You have a great responsibility on your shoulders," continued Mr. Smith, impressively. "We should like to help you bear it. Now, a graduate committee of — say Rhodes, Newbold, and me, with all the assistance we could command, would give you much better support than Rhodes alone, and keep you in close touch with the alumni. We shouldn't undertake to dictate, of course, but just work with you to win."

He paused once more. This time Thorne's answer was ready. He spoke quickly, his voice sharp with feeling, his eye flashing resentment.

"I may as well be frank with you, Mr. Smith. It's very nice of you to take such an interest in us, but I wouldn't stand for that kind of interference a minute. Rhodes has agreed to act as coach, and the faculty has accepted him. That settles it. He's going to be head coach and field coach

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and assistant coach and everything else, without being tripped up by a lot of volunteers butting in every day with a different set of directions. If he wants help from the graduates, let him select for himself. I wouldn't have Newbold on the field under any conditions. Whether we win or lose, I propose to run my own team."

"To-day's practice doesn't promise much in the way of winning," sneered the graduate.

"Perhaps not."

"You're very foolish to antagonize the alumni."

"We aren't antagonizing anybody. We just want to be let alone."

"This answer is final?"

"Yes."

"Then I sincerely hope you'll have no cause to regret it."

Saying this in a tone which negatived the hope, Mr. Smith bowed with crushing politeness and departed, shaking off the dust of his feet against a recalcitrant and ungrateful generation. Thorne turned into the dressing-rooms, bearing a heart weighted with disgust, but unswerving in his purpose. John Smith and Newbold! Rather than submit to any such leadership, he'd chuck the whole business!

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CHAPTER V

THE STUBBORN GRIND

JEFF kept away from the playground for the next few days, turning his back upon its allurement in a fine burst of resolution; but he could not keep his thoughts from the subject of football, nor stop his ears to the gossip that flew about him. In this he had no chance to play any other part than that of listener, for no one thought it worth while to ask his opinion. Indeed, there were times when it seemed to the sensitive lad that a group dissolved at his approach as if to avoid the necessity of admitting him to comradeship, or that a pair of cronies lowered their tones as he passed. His own classmates were the worst offenders in this respect. Adolf Herz, the class dummy, was the only one who sought him out, and Adolf's attentions were too evidently inspired by an urgent need of help on lessons, to serve as balm for wounded self-esteem. Gus Perrin of the first class always spoke to him pleasantly when they met, and Jack Graham, who sat near him in the

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geometry class, and who had the habit of doing exactly as he liked without regard to conventions, — so Jeff was to learn later, — showed himself friendly in a general and impersonal fashion. Thorne, after the discovery that he was not available as football material, was too busy to give him further attention.

It was on the Friday morning before the first practice game that Jeff, brooding over this strange unwillingness on the part of his schoolmates to consider him one of them, came moodily up the schoolhouse walk a few minutes before nine. Below in the playground he caught sight of several energetic members of the fourth class, noisily engaged in kicking practice. Jeff strolled round the corner of the building to watch the youngsters, passing on the way a knot of older fellows chatting cosily together. Thorne gave him a nod; Perrin threw out an amicable "Hello!" The others ignored his presence. Wounded by this manifestation of indifference, Jeff walked hastily on to the end of the field, where he halted, deeply miserable, to make a presence of watching the kids. Just at that moment, Winnie Thorne succeeded in sending a kick that Freddy Danvers

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couldn't get. The ball came bouncing along the ground to Jeff's feet.

"Thank you, Richards!" shouted Freddy. "Right here, please!"

Jeff stooped for the ball, intending to pass it back over the twenty yards to Freddy. But as he lifted it from the ground, as he felt the tense, hard leather surface in his hands, an irresistible impulse seized him to try his powers. He took a single step, lifted his knee, and the ball shot forward, whirling on its longer axis, far over Winnie's head. The boy gaped at it as it pierced the air above him, turned to watch it as it fell, then turned again to cast reproaches at the offender.

Jeff's repentance was immediate. "I'm sorry!" he cried. "I'll chase it!" — and darted up the field. He had scarce covered a dozen paces when an authoritative call from the group at the embankment brought him to a stand.

"No! Stay where you are! I'll get it."

Russell Thorne dashed past his sputtering brother, silencing his protests with two forcible syllables, and adding rather as an indication of his own purpose than as an apology for interference, "I want that ball."

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"Return it, Richards!" he shouted, as he punted down the field. "Over my head if you can."

Jeff obeyed to the letter. The return carried so far over Thorne's head, that he could only reach it by a sharp run backwards. He succeeded in getting his hands on the ball as it fell, but the twisting thing slipped through them. Vexed at himself for this display of fumbling, Thorne kicked savagely back; but Jeff had to advance to catch the ball, and again his punt outmeasured the distance, and drove the receiver backwards. Then the bell rang.

"That was good work!" vouchsafed Thorne on the way in, his eye dwelling approvingly on the solid trunk and substantial limbs of the boy at his side. "Where did you learn that kick?"

"At a school up in the country. I had a lot of practice at it last year."

"Played half-back, didn't you?"

"Yes, when I played. How did you know that?"

"By the cut of your jib. You've just the build for it. I want to see you out this afternoon."

"Oh, I can't," faltered Jeff, in sudden dismay at the consequences of his thoughtless act.

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"You've got to!" answered Thorne, sharply. "I'll see you at recess."

All that morning Jeff struggled with harassing thoughts. He had caught the attention of his schoolmates beyond doubt; but his position now would be harder to maintain than ever. He had committed a serious error. What could he say to Thorne? What justification could he offer for refusing to support the school in the one way in which the schoolboy holds that loyalty is proved? How could he convince a blind enthusiast like the football captain that he hadn't time for football when he was himself conscious of wasting hours in longing for its forbidden joys?

"But why can't you come out?" persisted the captain at recess. "It can't be your studies, for they tell me you're about the best in the class. It can't be that you're scared of getting hurt — a fellow of your weight. What is it?"

"Well, my brother —"

A look of malevolence darkened Thorne's face. "Oh, it's your brother!" he interjected with scornful emphasis.

"Not my brother only, but the circumstances," Jeff made haste to explain. "You see, I have my

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own way to make and it's important that I should do the best I can with my lessons. If I go into athletics, I should get absorbed and neglect my work. So, you see, it's best for me to keep out altogether. It's the only safe way."

"You really believe that, do you?" Thorne's voice sounded sceptical.

Jeff winced. "Why, yes — my brother thinks so, anyway."

"Now it's coming out. You won't play because your brother doesn't want you to. He wants you to grind all the time and never to have any fun or any friends, and in the end to be just such another as — It's dead wrong. You could keep up your studies, and you know it."

"Yes, I suppose I might if I tried hard."

"It will help you out in school if you play football, and help your brother out, too. Talk it over with him again and bring him round. We need you. Of course, I do not know how much use you would be in the general play; but if you can do other things as well as you can punt, you ought to help us a lot."

"Oh, I'm no great player," Jeff said hastily. "I probably shouldn't do anything if I did come out."

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He spoke with self-depreciation, but his imagination, suddenly lifted above the dreary level of prudence and possibility, was already soaring in an enchanted region. The instinct which nature had implanted in him and which no system of restraint could alter, cried its demands aloud. Jeff possessed in full measure the mental equipment of the athlete: an impulse sensitive to training, consciousness of physical strength, the yearning for physical contest, faith in his powers of mind and body. If he pretended to doubt his ability, it was only a seemly modesty that spoke. He knew that he could play, almost as surely as he knew that he wanted to.

"You can give us a chance to try you, anyhow. See your brother, and be out to-day if you can."

Thorne's words and manner both indicated that he considered all objections properly met and the way smoothed for the immediate appearance of the recruit on the field. This false assumption, Jeff felt, must be removed at all costs.

"I don't think I can come," he said, in nervous haste. "You'd better count me out. I shouldn't be of much use, and — I guess I'd better keep out of it."

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Thorne growled an exclamation and shot a look of resentment at Richards. "I see. The simple fact is that you don't want to come out. You don't want to help the school. You don't mind getting all you can out of it, but you won't do anything for it!"

"It isn't that — " protested Jeff.

"Oh, if you wanted to, you could do it all right."

There were tears in Jeff's eyes as the captain flung angrily away, tears which he was ashamed to own and yet had a struggle to suppress. They came again that evening as he bowed over his book in his own room after the interview with his brother. It had turned out exactly as he had anticipated. Mr. Richards had not forbidden him to play; he had left the decision entirely in the boy's hands, but he had stated the case in such a way as to make it absolutely clear that any decision but one would involve both disloyalty and ingratitude. Another year, perhaps, when Jeff's scholarship had become firmly established, he might take some part in the school sports without losing so much by the waste of energy. At present, however, he stood at the bottom of a long ladder which he must climb, rung by rung, by his

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own efforts. It was important to get a secure foothold at the outset, to make the right start. The first thing to learn was to concentrate his attention on his work. Football was physically exhausting and mentally distracting.

"Don't you suppose I could play and keep up my studies, too, if I tried hard?" pleaded Jeff. "I waste a good deal of time thinking about it now."

"Then you must stop thinking about it," answered Mr. Richards, coldly. "If you played, the game would soon engross your thoughts entirely. I never knew a football player whose work did not fall off before the season was over, though, of course, some are affected more than others." He paused a moment before he added as a clincher: "Your education will be all the resource you will have with which to meet the world. We must both be ready to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to obtain it. Five years from now you will smile to think how much you made of this trifle."

Five years is a long time to wait for a smile, and what one person considers a trifle may seem a mountain to another. So Jeff felt as with apolo-

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getic voice and downcast mien he delivered to Thorne his final answer, on Monday morning. Thorne received it with manifest disgust, but made no protest. In fact, he was too well pleased with the showing of his team in their first practice match to waste many sighs over the loss of a green recruit for the second eleven. The entire line, from Ray on the right end to Skillen on the left, had played a strong, aggressive game. The captain had found no great difficulty in dropping back from his position at tackle to do the punting, Bobby Burns was working in well at quarter, and Jack Graham was faster than ever in getting through the line. The Crustys, old and young, might go to blazes!

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CHAPTER VI

JEFF UNDERSTANDS

The report worked rapidly through the school that Young Crusty, though capable of great achievements on the football field, had flatly refused to come out. The reasons assigned were various, but generally uncomplimentary. Some averred that he was too lazy, others that he was a greasy grind who cared nothing for the true interests of the school, still others that Old Crusty wouldn't let him play. This last explanation, which one might suppose would acquit him of all personal fault, in reality produced a most unfavorable effect, for if he was wholly under his brother's thumb, without opinion or will of his own, what part could he play but that of a spy within the garrison?

Jeff was not surprised that the coldness of the school towards him now became more pronounced. What he could not understand was the reason for the earlier prejudice. He knew that his brother bore the unflattering nickname of Crusty, and was

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in a way unpopular; but he had no notion of the strength of the feeling that prevailed, nor did he consider that dislike of the teacher would naturally involve suspicion of himself. His duty to be loyal to his school associates in all his relations with his brother was to Jeff so obvious that it did not occur to him that others might distrust him.

An incident soon happened that opened his eyes to several unpleasant facts. Adolf Herz, commonly known as "Dutchy," has been mentioned as the dunce of the second class. He was likewise class buffoon and frequent butt for class jokes. Adolf stood near the lunch-counter at recess, dealing out poor puns and silly witticisms. He had made two passable recitations that day, and felt elated in consequence.

"Dutchy, you're nutty!" said Stevens, with interesting frankness; "you get worse every day."

"You ought to be muzzled or locked up," added Boyle.

"All right, lock me up!" proclaimed Adolf, cheerfully. "Where shall it be?"

Jack Graham, prowling through the basement in search of amusement, caught this invitation and joined the group.

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"You want to be locked up, do you, Dutchy?" he asked, with businesslike directness.

"Yes, they say I ought to be. I'm dippy," answered Dutchy, now maudlin with the attention shown him.

Jack pulled a padlock from his pocket, slipped the hasp through the buttonhole of Adolf's coat and snapped it into position. "There you are, locked tight; you can't get out if you want to."

Adolf glanced ruefully down at the clumsy black thing dangling at the most conspicuous buttonhole of his coat. "Why can't I get out?" he asked.

"Because you haven't got the key."

"But you have."

"No, I haven't. I lost it yesterday."

For a time Adolf seemed to be no less amused at this statement than the hooting crowd about him. Then his expression of reckless hilarity suddenly gave way to one of consternation.

"Oh, give me the key, Jack!" he pleaded. "I can't wear this thing round all day."

"How can I give it to you if I haven't it? I'm telling you the truth."

"What shall I do?"

"Cut it out, or file it off, or just wear it as it is."

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As the first two suggestions were impractical, Adolf was forced to adopt the third. He trailed into Mr. Richards's room in the rear of the class, clutching tight the lapel of his coat and keeping strict guard against interference. He sat with an air of close interest while Mr. Richards explained at length the principles involved in the Latin sentences which he was returning. It is possible that such devoted attention on the part of Adolf Herz appeared to the teacher unusual. It may be that he was struck by the contrast between the hankering after knowledge expressed in Adolf's attitude, and the exasperating ignorance registered in black and white on his paper.

"Do you understand the distinction, Herz?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir."

"Then go to the board and write the second sentence."

Adolf rose amid the smiles of the class.

"Take your book with you," added the teacher; "you will need it."

Adolf needed something more than the book, as he concluded after striving for a time to guess what distinction Crusty could be talking about.

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Assuming that Crusty's attention was absorbed in the recitation, the unfortunate at the board whispered a cry of distress to Oliver, who sat nearest him. Before Oliver could respond, Mr. Richards pounced upon the offender.

"Herz, were you trying to talk to Oliver?"

"Yes, sir," answered Adolf, with his nose to the blackboard.

"Turn round! Look at me! Take down your hand!"

Adolf obeyed, while the class turned toward him roguishly grinning faces. It was these grins, implying as he thought the existence of a plot against the peace of his room, that aroused Mr. Richards's ire.

"What's that in the buttonhole of your coat?"

"A padlock, sir. It's locked in."

"Who put it there?"

Adolf, at a loss for a reply, gazed about in grotesque perplexity. The class tittered. Mr. Richards bristled at the affront.

"I shall give you two deportment marks," he said sternly, "one for dishonesty at the board, and one for trying to disturb the recitation by wearing ridiculous attachments to your dress."

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"I wasn't trying to disturb the recitation," expostulated Adolf. "I couldn't help it."

"We won't discuss the matter further. Take your seat."

Jeff had listened to the dialogue with downcast eyes, uncomfortable under the mortifying impression that his brother was making a mountain out of a molehill and treating Dutchy with undeserved harshness. Two marks constituted a heavy penalty, for four in a month would result in a censure card, and three censure cards in a term brought expulsion. When the recitation was once more following its regular course, Jeff lifted his eyes and glanced shyly about the room. On every sullen face he read indignant disapproval. Not a single smile, not even a reminiscent curve of the lip, remained to testify to the roguish glee with which his classmates had looked forward to Dutchy's confusion.

After school Jeff went in search of Herz. He found him in the corridor surrounded by a group of scowling sympathizers.

"Come down to the workshop, Herz," he said. "I'll help you get that thing off."

Adolf eyed him doubtfully; the others drew back.

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"You don't want to wear it through the streets, do you?" pursued Jeff. "Come on. I can file it off in three minutes."

As speedy deliverance from his bonds seemed to Adolf at that moment more important than listening to futile expressions of pity, he turned his back on his new patrons, and followed Jeff down stairs. In the shop Jeff found a file and set himself to work.

"It's hard luck," he said, as he scraped away. "I don't think you got a fair deal."

"It don't seem to me I did. I might have got Willis to take it off, but Willis is slow as death. I thought Crusty'd be sore with me if I was late. A censure card will raise Cain for me at home, my reports are so bad."

"Who put it on?"

"Jack Graham. You won't give it away to your brother, will you?"

Jeff lowered his file abruptly and raised his eyes to Adolf's face. "Of course I shan't!" he exclaimed hotly. "What do you take me for?"

"Oh, I don't believe you would," Adolf made haste to explain. "Some fellows might think so, but I don't."

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Jeff was filing again. "Why do they think so?"

"Well, you're Crusty's brother and live with him, and they don't like him; so they've got the notion that you'd tell him about things that happen in school. I think you're all right."

Not another word did Jeff utter until his task was finished. "There, now you're out of jail," he said in a strained voice, as he removed the padlock, "and if you'll come round to-morrow at quarter to nine, I'll go over the Latin with you."

Adolf threw a glance of relief at the empty buttonhole. "That looks better. Much obliged." He might well have been contented with this brief acknowledgment, but he blundered on, "And don't think I'm down on you for being Crusty's brother, because I ain't."

"All right," Jeff answered, forcing an unhappy smile. "Quarter to nine to-morrow morning — don't forget it!"

Adolf went off to dress for football, and ultimately to rid himself of his depression by a hard practice on the second. Jeff, having no such resource, dragged himself homeward, absolutely crushed in spirit. He had no doubts now as to his position in school. "I'm not down on you for

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being Crusty's brother" was the key to the whole situation. He understood now what Thorne had meant in saying that football would help him out in school. He needed help indeed!

That evening Jeff broke a long silence at the study table by asking, "Charles, don't you think you were pretty hard on Herz to-day?"

Mr. Richards frowned at the recollection. "No, his only object in wearing the padlock was to create a scene."

"Some one else put it on him at recess; he couldn't get it off without being late to recitation."

"It was part of a scheme for disturbance. Those little conspiracies have to be sharply dealt with."

It was useless to offer suggestions. Their fates were fixed; Crusty was Crusty, and Jeff was Crusty's brother!

During the week that followed, Jeff went apathetically about his work. He spoke to no one who did not first speak to him; he avoided association with his fellows. In every knot of intimates talking seriously in a corner, he imagined enemies. Every hour he spent in his brother's recitation-

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room he was haunted by a nervous dread of some humiliating scene. He dwelt morbidly on his brother's faults as they appeared to his now critical eye, and overlooked the sterling virtues that offset them. At home he was silent and constrained, laboring mechanically at his books and making no comments on school affairs.

Meantime the football practice had gone forward vigorously under the inspiring influence of one victory and one tie game. Abandoning hope of discovering hidden stars, Thorne bent all his energies to the task of making the most of the material in hand. As it was clear that Thorne must do the bulk of the punting, Rhodes devised two onside kick plays and a fake to cover the purpose of the tackle in dropping back. West was improving in the game at half-back, but his defensive was still weak. Hiatt, the other half, made no progress at all.

"It's the line that we must rely on," said the captain as he left the field with the coach on the eve of the game with Milton, "the line and Jack Graham. Burns must send Hiatt at the sure holes. He has no force in him."

"The line must learn to drag the backs for-

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ward," answered Rhodes; "that's where we must put our work in, from now on."

"The line can't play the whole game. I'm more worried about our defensive now. If a man gets through us, unless Jack nabs him, he'll go down to Bobby every time."

"I think West and Hiatt will get most of 'em."

Thorne wasn't so confident of this as the coach, but it is the business of a coach both to be confident and to inspire confidence. There was a reasonable amount of this excellent quality in the team that Thorne took with him to Milton. They started with a dash that carried them to their opponents' ten-yard line. Here Burns fumbled and lost a down, West couldn't find his hole, Jack was caught while circling the end, and the ball went to the other side on downs. In the whole game Newbury never came so near scoring again. Before the whistle blew for the intermission, the Milton quarter had discovered that Hiatt was the unsteadiest part of the Newbury defence. In the last half Milton sent two good forward passes in succession into Hiatt's territory, recovering the ball each time. Then when the Newbury backfield was drawn toward the left, the fastest Milton

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half was pushed through outside of Thorne and heavily escorted across the goal-line. Later, Bobby Burns barely averted another touch-down by a superb flying tackle on his fifteen-yard line.

Hiatt was heartbroken. "I don't know how it happened," he lamented to his captain. "I simply couldn't get my hands on the ball."

"I'm not the one to find fault with you," Thorne answered. "I let Blackmore get by me when he made that touch-down."

When he was alone with the coach, however, his attitude was very different. "We're dying for want of a back," he mourned. "The team's like a dam with a hole in it. When the water gets going through, it washes the whole thing away."

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CHAPTER VII

MR. RICHARDS LOSES HIS POINT

THORNE did not appeal to Jeff again. Instead, he carried his troubles to Dr. Morgan and besought him to use his influence with Mr. Richards to bring Jeff out.

"It's probably too late now to do anything with him," he explained, " but I don't want to feel after it's all over that I haven't done everything in my power to strengthen the team. I'd just like to see what he can do."

Dr. Morgan promised to "talk with Mr. Richards," — a time-worn formula of evasion which suggests an excellent disposition and commits the promiser to nothing. But the headmaster, though he used the formula, had no intention of evading.

"Why doesn't your brother play football?" he asked Mr. Richards that afternoon. "I understand that Thorne would like very much to have him out."

"It would interfere with his studies," replied

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the teacher, complacently. "He understands what he is here for. It was his own decision."

"Then he doesn't care for athletics?"

"Oh, he cares for them, or would care if he allowed himself to think of them; but he realizes that his future depends on his present effort and that he must not scatter his energies."

"I'm not sure that football wouldn't be good for him. As far as I can learn, he does his work admirably, but seems to have made no friends. He would get acquainted very much faster if he took part in the school sports. And our team does need reënforcement."

This last statement Dr. Morgan might better have omitted. It seemed to imply that he regarded success in athletics as an object for which principle might be sacrificed, — a premise which Mr. Richards could not accept for a moment.

"I thought we were all agreed that athletics had been a serious hindrance to school work," he said stiffly, "and that we were to do our utmost to hold them in check."

"Yes, but that doesn't mean that we are to refuse them reasonable sympathy when reasonably conducted."

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"They are not reasonably conducted when they absorb energy and ambition which should be devoted to higher things. With regard to my brother, I stand *in loco parentis*. As a teacher, I don't object to a boy's playing football, if he keeps up his work, but as a guardian, anxious for his future, I think Jefferson had better sacrifice amusement to duty. He has very properly accepted my point of view."

"He doesn't seem very happy," demurred the head-master.

"Oh, he is happy enough. He is naturally quiet, and slow to make friends."

Confidently as he had spoken of Jeff's complete contentment with his school life, Mr. Richards did not like the thought that to others his brother had appeared unhappy. On more than one occasion in the past, the head-master's judgment of a boy's character had proved truer than his own. The recollection of these instances was disquieting. He studied Jeff's face covertly that night as they sat on opposite sides of the study table, Jeff "doing" his Greek, the teacher busy with the "First Lessons in Latin," which he hoped to have ready to submit to a publisher in January.

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Jeff's interest was evidently in his work; his face showed only concentration, brightened by an occasional gleam of satisfaction as some knot of perplexing syntax unravelled itself.

"A scholar's mind," thought the brother, proudly. "His books are all the happiness he needs."

But he wanted confirmation of his opinion. "How do you like school?" he asked abruptly.

Jeff started, but did not look up. "Oh, pretty well," he answered. His voice showed no enthusiasm.

"How do you find the boys?"

"I guess they're all right."

At nine o'clock Jeff closed his book, and, leaning back in his chair, clasped his hands behind his head. His eyes shifted vacantly from one point on the shadowed wall to another; his expression drooped from apathy to dejection.

"Finished already!" asked Mr. Richards, cheerfully.

"Yes, I've done everything but the German. I have two hours for that to-morrow."

"Why don't you do some reading during your

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spare time? It makes a pleasant break in the routine of study."

"I have all the reading I want in English."

"Well, go to bed, then. You look tired."

"I ought not to; I don't do anything to make me tired," said Jeff, as he rose to obey. If he put more force into this remark than had characterized any utterance of his during the evening, the cause was not far to seek — for any one but Mr. Richards. The boy longed for the privilege of tiring himself, of hurling himself into the clash of the football scrimmage, and spending, in the cause of the school and his brother, the energy that pressed for outlet. During the last week, the idea of his brother's unpopularity had grown upon him until it was out of all proportion to the actual fact. He felt it as a crushing burden under which his school life was becoming unendurable. In football he saw his only chance to redeem the family name in the eyes of the school. And the season was slipping away, bearing with it his opportunity!

When Mr. Richards arrived at school the next morning, — he was usually the first teacher on the scene, — he found tacked to his door the following poster: —

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VAST VIVACIOUS VERSATILE

VAUDEVILLE

ENDORSED BY PRESS AND PULPIT

DAILY PERFORMANCE 9 AM to 2 PM

THE CRUSTY BROTHERS

IN THEIR SCREAMING FARCE, ENTITLED

"HAPPY SCHOOLDAYS"

THE SCINTILLATING, SARCASTIC SKIT OF THE SEASON

ALSO YOUNG CRUSTY

FUNNY MONOLOGUE ARTIST, ESPECIALLY IMPORTED FROM SQUEEDUNK

SUBJECTS — "SCHOOL SPIRIT"
"WHY I DO NOT STOOP TO FOOTBALL"
"A CHIP of the OLD BLOCK"

THE PERFORMANCE WILL CLOSE WITH A SPEECH BY OLD CRUSTY on his favorite subject, "The PERNICIOUS INFLUENCE of ATHLETICS; HOW to AVOID it, or DO as I DO and be a GREAT MAN as I AM."

COME ONE! COME ALL!

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This specimen of schoolboy pleasantry Mr. Richards read through twice to its bitter end — the first time smiling grimly, the second hot with indignation.

"Outrageous!" he muttered through set teeth. "The cowards!"

But the teacher knew well from earlier experience that it is the part of practical wisdom to ignore anonymous insults like the one before him, however loudly they may cry to heaven for retribution. An investigation runs hardly one chance in ten of bringing the guilty to justice, and, by giving notoriety to the libel, furthers the malicious purpose of its authors. He therefore pried out the tacks with his penknife, folded the placard and put it carefully into his pocket. Satisfied that he had crushed the viper as soon as it had begun to crawl, he bravely addressed himself to the task of forgetting that it had existed.

The task was beyond his powers. Before school began, during the opening exercises in the hall, at intervals in the recitation-room, where watchful eyes detected and interpreted his gloomy preoccupation, Mr. Richards found his thoughts recurring to the ugly slurs of the poster. The im-

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plication that he was by no means the great man he thought himself, and that his own achievements and character but poorly recommended the stern intellectual ideals which he professed, was an unpalatable morsel to swallow; but the teacher, who in reality entertained no illusions as to his position in the great world, might expect to choke it down in time. The worst element in the case was the unfair treatment of Jeff. The boy had been guilty of no offence to his schoolmates except that of declining to play football for reasons which Mr. Richards found perfectly reasonable. It was infamous to make him suffer for his brother's unpopularity!

That night it was Jeff who broke the silence of the study hour. He had not seen the copy of the poster that circulated among the boys, but Adolf had spoken of its existence, and Jeff's imagination reared a monstrous structure upon the hint.

"Do you think it's absolutely necessary for me to go to college, Charles?"

His brother lifted a face blank with astonishment.

"Why shouldn't I go right to work now?" went on Jeff, hurriedly, keeping his eyes averted from

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his brother's countenance. "It will cost a lot to send me through college. It would be much better for you to take the money and go to Europe with it instead of spending it on me. If I could get into a good place, I might work up quite a way in the years I should spend here and in college."

"But you have always wanted to go to college!" gasped Mr. Richards. "I thought we settled that years ago."

"It isn't too late to change. Why do I need to go to college? A great many very successful men never had even a high school course."

"You will always regret it if you turn back now," said the elder brother. The crackling of the placard in his pocket as he turned in his chair emphasized the fact that Jeff's position in school could not be an easy one. "Unpleasant things will happen," he added sadly, "but if you face them bravely and keep a clear conscience, you will find them not impossible to bear."

Jeff studied with heavy eyes the pattern of the wall-paper. He was conscious that his attitude was cowardly, but moral courage comes hard to a boy in his teens, and the fresh revelation of his schoolmates' ill-will, following, as it did, a week of

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melancholy brooding, had made him desperate. He had grown morbidly sensitive to the unpleasantness of his surroundings. To face the same conditions day after day, as the weeks dragged into months and the months wore away to the full year, seemed beyond his powers of endurance. If he could do something to turn the tide of dislike which set so strong against his brother, there would be some hope in the outlook. But what could an insignificant boy do for a man determined to keep his virtues hidden behind the mask of his faults?

In the silence which followed, Mr. Richards prepared his argument. If Jeff had been allowed to play football, he would have had no thought of leaving school. Would he permit a mere trifle like a boy's game to determine a question of life importance? The absurdity of such a step must be brought home to him.

"Supposing I should tell you now to go out and play football—" he began. He got no further, for Jeff was on his feet, bursting out in a torrent of joy:—

"Oh, thank you, thank you! That's all I want. I didn't mean to ask it again, but now

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you've proposed it yourself, it's all right. I'll do my studying better than I've ever done it; I'll be perfect. And I'll fight on the field for us both — if it only isn't too late!"

Mr. Richards gaped, astounded, at the radiant quivering face before him. He opened his mouth to correct the misapprehension, but the words came slowly. "I didn't intend —"

"I know you didn't," Jeff broke in tumultuously. "You thought you were doing the right thing, as you always try to do. You didn't understand how hard it is for a fellow to want to take his part with the others and feel that he might accomplish something worth while, and yet have to keep out of everything and know that the fellows despise him. There was a paper going round to-day about us two. It said you were down on athletics and we hadn't any school spirit, and I wouldn't play football though the school needed me. They won't say that again now. I have my chance, the chance I've longed for so much. Oh, you can't think how relieved I feel!"

Mr. Richards looked into the eyes of his brother, gleaming bright with joy and gratitude, and felt his purpose waver. The boy stood transformed.

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The sullen apathy had vanished from his face; in its place blazed forth an exultant fire of ardor and determination before which the teacher's Spartan firmness melted like wax. He had not the heart to crush that spirit.

"Well, if you must play, play hard!" he said resignedly. "Don't let a good scholar be put to shame on the field by a lot of thickheads."

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CHAPTER VIII

THE GREEN JERSEY TO THE FORE

THE reception which Thorne gave to Jeff's news next morning could hardly be termed enthusiastic.

"You've taken a mighty long time to make up your mind," he said coolly. "The best part of the season's over."

The new candidate looked his disappointment. "I'm sorry, but I couldn't get round to it before. I hope I'm not too late to be of any use."

"We'll see what you can do. Report to Jackson on the second. Three o'clock sharp!"

Jeff employed the hour between two and three in providing himself with football trousers and head guard, and in having cleats put on a pair of old shoes. He was on the field at three, dressed in an old green jersey, yellow khaki trousers, and stockings of rusty red — a spectacular combination. The guards which he had tied over his shoulders bulged his jersey in an even horizontal surface — like huge epaulets worn out of sight.

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They gave his shoulders the appearance of deformity; at a distance one might easily conceive his trunk to be a block of wood, shaped like a keystone and painted green. His new trousers, swelling over pads and strips of cane and very solid thighs, looked all breadth and no height; while the red calves, despite the sharp flare of their lines, seemed scarcely adequate to the structure reared upon them. The whole effect was undeniably grotesque. Freddy Danvers, standing at the edge of the field with a pair of his cronies of the fourth, giggled with glee at the sight.

"Gee! look at the gink's get-up!" he chuckled. "If that was all muscle, now, he wouldn't do a thing to the Trowbridge line, would he?"

"It's all pads and fat," answered Winnie, contemptuously. "He's a fat freak. He won't make good."

"He did you fellows up pretty well in the gym the first day of school," remarked Skinny Wilson with a grin.

"That doesn't prove anything," retorted the omniscient Winnie. "It's easy for a big fellow to rough-house kids. You've got to have some stuff in you to play football on our team."

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There were others among the spectators, older than Winnie, and, it is to be hoped, wiser, who shared his opinion, though they were under too good discipline to express it so freely. On the face of it, there appeared small possibility that the shy, silent, spiritless boy, who so far in his school career had shown no interest in anything but his lessons, should possess the mettle which the game requires. These critics must have felt their doubts increase as they watched the struggles of the new recruit with the tackling dummy. Rhodes had changed the attachment of the leather figure; it no longer came away from its supports at the first tug, but swung, securely fastened, from the pulley by which it was drawn to and fro along the iron bar. The tackler had to grip its slippery sides so firmly that he could hang his weight upon it. In this first test, handicapped by his inexperience and his weight, Jeff failed miserably. Rhodes gave him a few trials, enlivened by frank criticism, then sent him off with Thorne to punt for the backs and ends.

Here the newcomer found himself immediately. At the end of five minutes there was no doubt in the mind of anybody that the fellow could kick.

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On the high sailers that linger in the air while the ends go down, he was easily the captain's superior. Here the comparison stopped. He had a long, low kick that kept on going over the head of the receiver, when by all presumptions of experience it should have dropped into his hands. He got off his punts in half the time required by Thorne, and he could place them better. The urchins of the fourth stood in amazement.

"He's putting it all over Russell. How do you suppose he makes 'em go so?"

Winnie didn't expect an answer, but Danvers had one ready. "By being a fat freak, of course. You never know anything. I see where Hiatt gets fired."

Winnie reserved his judgment on this point, and there ensued an argument on Hiatt's good and bad points, which, with casual leaps into all sorts of disconnected subjects, occupied the time while the second was running through signals with the new player, and the two teams prepared for their afternoon bout. When Jackson set the game going by a weak kick-off, the trio forgot their discussions and followed along the side-lines, intent on the play.

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If there was one person on the field that afternoon whose spirit, by the standards of a coach, was wholly commendable, that person was Jeff Richards. He felt that he had but twenty minutes in which to offset three weeks of contemptuous treatment. Jackson had placed him as line back opposite Thorne and Firman, where the attacks were always fiercest. On the first charge, as West drove through the line with Thorne's arm around him and Graham pushing behind, the green jersey plumped him squarely and dropped him on the spot. When Jack Graham tried the outside tackle hole, it was Richards again who smashed the well-practised formation and overthrew the fleet runner before he could gather headway. Then the second secured the ball on Thorne's kick, and Jeff, after one hard plunge through the left side where his own men contributed more than his opponents to check his advance, punted over Hiatt's head. The quarterback recovered the ball near his goal-line, but only ran it back to the twenty-yard line. The first had actually lost ground!

After this Burns ran his game more cautiously. He worked the side of his line away from the green

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jersey, and when the play hung, used an onside kick or a forward pass to Ray which Richards was unable to interfere with. Even beyond the centre the new player made himself feared. He tried for everything within reach, grappling savagely when he could get at the man, smashing his way toward the ball when the interference blocked him off. Desperately anxious to prove his mettle, he spent himself without a thought of reserve. The second, encouraged by unexpected success in holding their opponents, developed a power of resistance which they had never shown before. The first advanced but slowly. When they had gained thirty yards by successful charges or a fortunate pass, they lost fifteen on the exchange of punts after a third down.

Jeff's breath was coming fast, as the ball by a lucky capture of a fumble came into the hands of the second in the middle of the field.

"You'd better stop, Richards," called the coach. "You've had enough for the first day."

"I'm all right!" panted Jeff. "Give me another minute! — Three — eight," he gasped in the ears of his quarter.

"Nine — three — eight — seven — six — four!"

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sang out the quarter. Jeff took the ball, folded his arms about it, and dashed outside his left guard. There was a hole in front of him six inches wide when he struck the line; he left it wider by two feet. Skillen, right end on the first, leaping for the yellow legs, caught a half hold and was snapped off by his own momentum, as the runner lurched away. Hiatt lay in wait beyond; Jeff went over him, dragged him five yards, shook him off, and passed on. Before he reached Burns, the last sentinel before the goal-line, a tiger in the person of Graham pounced on his back and bore him to the ground.

When Jackson had taken possession of the ball, Jeff raised himself slowly to his feet, but he clutched Jackson's arm with one hand, while his head bowed forward and his whole frame shook with his quick convulsive breathing.

"Hurt?" asked Thorne, anxiously, as he put a supporting arm behind the heaving shoulders.

Jeff smiled faintly, mortified at his weakness. "No," he gasped, "I guess — I'm all in."

"I don't wonder!" answered the captain, heartily. "You've done the work of three men."

"That's all for you, Richards," called the coach. "Get in now and have your shower."

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Jeff dropped Jackson's arm and dragged himself away towards the schoolhouse. He knew that he ought to run, but there was no run in him. By the time he reached the knot of spectators at the side-lines, he had got his breath again, and could face them boldly. He read in their looks surprise and respect. It was evidently his day, the day of vindication for which he had yearned and hungered. And yet, as he felt his muscles yield flabbily to his will and his legs tremble beneath his weight, he could not help suspecting that he had overreached. He had driven himself to exhaustion without the support of previous training; by making a grand display on his first day out, he had raised expectations which he might never be able to satisfy. He had played not wisely but too well.

He felt better after his bath. As he was dressing, the fellows began to drift in from the field, chattering noisily about the practice, and, to Jeff's delight, including him in their talk.

"They got two touch-downs on us after you left," Jackson related. "We missed you behind the line."

"It was great, the way you went through

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Hiatt!" said Pierce, the quarter-back of the second. "He didn't even stagger you. You ought to have been out three weeks ago."

"They'll probably take you away from us to-morrow," Jackson added. "That's the worst thing about this second-team business. As soon as a man begins to do something, they steal him and give us a slob in his place."

The room filled rapidly. Thorne and Graham sought Jeff out in his corner, the former to ask him how he felt and bid him take care of himself, the latter to compliment him on his playing. Rhodes also came to talk with him about his previous experience. West was very curious to find out how he had learned to kick, and Ray jestingly remarked that if every one punted as Richards did, the ends would have to get up a protective union to save their legs. Altogether the new player had every reason to be satisfied with the change in the social temperature brought about by his first adventure on the field.

An hour's rest at home restored Jeff's physical poise, and enabled him to attack his Greek before dinner. Mr. Richards, returning from a long walk, found him busy with his work, his face aglow

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with a spirit of joy that raised him above all sense of bodily weariness.

"Well, how did it go?" asked the elder brother with evident interest. "Not badly, I judge."

Jeff related, modestly and briefly, in true boy fashion, the events of the afternoon, not forgetting to include in his report the comments of his comrades. "Too much for the first lesson, I'm afraid," the teacher remarked at the end of the recital. "You must take things more easily until you get used to the strain. If you are going through a gladiatorial fight every day, I shall have to see that you have gladiator's food. When you make the team, I'll come and see you play."

This last promise filled Jeff's cup to overflowing, for he had it on the authority of Adolf that no one had ever seen Crusty at a school game.

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CHAPTER IX

AN ERROR IN JUDGMENT

JEFF awoke the next morning stiff and lame. There were bruises on his arms and legs which he had not been aware of the evening before. His feverish eagerness to throw himself into the rough and tumble had noticeably abated. He felt, indeed, that it would be the part of wisdom to omit practice that afternoon altogether; but when Thorne thrust into his hands before school the diagrams of plays and signals, and told him to "get them down before three o'clock," he was ashamed to confess the whole truth. He did try to suggest that it would be well for him to take light work, but Thorne reassured him.

"Oh, that's all right! We're going to take it easy to-day on account of to-morrow's game — just a short signal practice, and a little running down under punts. I'm going to try you in the game in Hiatt's place, so you see you've got to have the signals."

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Jeff did see, and was silent. He couldn't play in the game without the signal practice, and he must play, for the contest with Brookfield High was the last before the league games began. It was his eleventh-hour chance to make the team. The practice, however, was not so easy as it might have been made. In the first place, Rhodes insisted on a lesson with the dummy, then Jeff had to punt for the ends, and finally the signals involved many trips from one goal to another with wearying repetitions and hard brain work for the novice. He gradually got the better of his stiffness, as the practice advanced, but it affected his starting, and brought on him strong remonstrances from the coach. Hiatt took his old place again for the last ten minutes.

It was fortunate for Jeff that the next day was Saturday, and that he had no lessons which must be prepared that night. He sat with a book before him for an hour, so tired that he could hardly sit upright, much less concentrate his attention on work. He gave up the task at last as hopeless, and crawled away to bed at half-past eight. His first thought on waking in the morning was of his condition. He tried himself by stretching out

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his arms, kicking his legs, and twisting his body from the hips. It seemed to his sanguine mind that he was less stiff; but even after his bath he must have acknowledged, if he had been honest with himself, that the improvement was slight. He felt an unwonted heaviness in his limbs, and a marked reluctance in the working of his joints. The muscles of his thigh groaned protest when he put it through the kicking motion. His elasticity was gone. Instead of working together in co-operation, — muscles leaping to meet the will, carrying out its purposes before they are consciously formed, — Jeff's will and body were like master and slave at variance, the will commanding, "thou shalt!" the body groaning, "don't make me!"

"I shall be all right when I get into the game," Jeff said to himself as he dressed. "After the whistle blows, I shan't know that I have a leg. My nerves will carry me through." The idea was so agreeable that he recalled it at intervals during the morning, when his thoughts wandered from the deferred hopes of Æneas, and from black-bordered triangles, to his own hopes, — and to a certain white-lined rectangle with which they were

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connected. He repeated the assurance so many times that he really more than half believed it.

When the referee's whistle blew for the beginning of the game, it did seem as if Jeff's insubordinate muscles had returned to duty. At least they made no protest when the ball at the kick-off floated down into Jeff's arms, and he dived forward with it across three white lines, trailing with him for the last two yards a Brookfield end. At the very start Newbury made two first downs with apparent ease, West achieving three yards, Richards driving ahead four and five, and Graham, with Rhodes's trump formation, putting nearly twelve behind his swift feet. Then the triumphant advance came to a halt. Rushes by Richards and Graham left the ball still wide of the distance, and Newbury punted.

Jeff's kick was not wholly to his liking; the angle of its rise was too great to give the desired distance. The ends and tackles, however, profited by his fault, for they were so close upon the receiver as the ball fell into his hands that he had no alternative but to make a fair catch. The Brookfield captain elected to put the ball in play by a scrimmage, but his plans went wrong, and a

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kick ensued which covered no more ground than Jeff's, and occupied a shorter time in its flight. As a result, Burns was able to work it back a few yards before the pack pulled him down. Graham was stopped in his pet play outside Thorne with hardly four yards to his credit, and Jeff could force his way but two yards through the hole between centre and left guard. Again Newbury had to resort to punting.

Jeff fell back and held out his hands for the ball. He was bitterly vexed with himself for the weakness of his attack. The margin of successful resistance in football is often far smaller than it seems. A few more pounds of pressure applied at the right moment, a fraction of a second won in the plunge, and the balance turns from defeat to victory. Many a long gain has its origin in a movement that barely breaks its way. Jeff felt convinced that on his first day out he could have gained five yards through that line as easily as he had now made two. The conviction was not pleasing to his vanity or his hopes, but it lashed into keener action the muscles of his kicking leg. If he had lost his power to rush, he must at least prove that he still could punt.

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Conditions worked well for Jeff's attempt. Hewin's pass was perfect, delivering the ball straight to the kicker's waist; there was full time for correct adjustment, and the knee snap on which Jeff could not always count played him a propitious turn. The ball shot up in a great arc, travelling high and wide. The kick was beyond the reach of the ends. Skillen, whose ability in following punts was only mediocre, and who was further handicapped by being on the long side of the triangle, was blocked off two-thirds of the way down the field, and gave up the quest; Ray raced madly forward on a forlorn hope. The Brookfield receiver, running diagonally backward, turned to make his catch; but the ball swerved as it fell, slipped through his hands, and rolled away. Throwing himself at full length forward, as he had made many a head-on slide to second, Ray gathered it into his arms.

Fifteen yards to a touch-down! Elation put new spring into Jeff's slackening muscles. With a supreme effort that took his full reserve of strength, he tore his way through the Brookfield line six yards. Then West and Graham between them carried the ball over.

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There seemed no reason now why Newbury shouldn't score again before the intermission — so Thorne thought, and all the team except one.

Jeff knew that his fighting strength was gone, that though he might go through the motions indefinitely, the power necessary to do the work expected was no longer in him; he had drawn too wastefully on his diminished reservoir. In his heart he felt, too, that he ought to go to Thorne and ask to be relieved, but his pride rebelled against this course, which was both reasonable and honest. He could not bring himself to make the humiliating confession that his endurance was inferior to that of his colleagues. "I can hold out through the half, anyway," he repeated to himself. "I won't play the baby." Thus he flattered his vanity with the assurance that he was showing a creditable fortitude, but gave no thought to the question whether his sacrifice was helping or hindering the cause for which it was made. Let us not blame him unduly; older and better athletes are making the same mistake every day — and Jeff learned his lesson and paid his penalty.

From the very first scrimmage after the goal

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He tore his way through the Brookfield line six yards.
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was kicked, the Newbury left half failed to play up to his record. His punts were only fair, his rushes deplorably weak. Three yards represented his maximum gain; often he fell below two, and sometimes he was downed on the scrimmage line, struggling hard, but making no headway. Burns passed rapidly from encouragement and exhortation to violent scolding; Thorne came back from the line and ordered him fiercely to "get into it harder." The only result was to add confusion to a despairing consciousness of failure. In the middle of the field after a third down with but two yards to gain, Burns called for a complicated play which Hiatt always executed well. Richards bungled; the ball was lost.

A little later Brookfield was halted on a third down. Phillips, the Brookfield quarter, called the right end over to the opposite side of the line, Phillips crouched well outside of McClary, the left end, and half a yard behind him. Jeff, of course, observed the change, and, not noticing that Phillips was more than a foot behind the line, marked him as the new end entitled to receive a forward pass. The ball went back and was carried by the fullback directly out to the side.

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"Forward pass!" shouted Thorne. "Look out, Richards!"

Jeff heard the warning and saw the ball rise in the air as the two ends came dashing down upon him. He had to think quickly. He couldn't get the ball, but he could block off the man whose privilege it was to take it, and so let the pass fail by touching the ground. With this excellent design in mind, he threw himself in front of Phillips, who resigned himself to being blocked with surprising readiness. Meantime McClary took the pass on the run, and racing round Burns, deposited the ball between the goal-posts.

Of course loud protests rose from the Newbury players, but the official who had noted the position taken by Phillips declared that as he was not in the line, McClary was legally the end and entitled to take the pass. When this circumstance was made clear, Thorne's anger was turned against his erring half-back. Jeff was ignominiously ordered from the game and Hiatt called in.

When the team entered their quarters a few minutes later, they found the banished player struggling weakly with the lacings of his second shoe. Toilworn and wofully dispirited, Jeff gave little attention to the lukewarm words of sym-

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pathy which a few vouchsafed to him as they crowded in. Thorne did not notice him, but gathered his men together and harangued them earnestly. Presently Jack Graham slipped away from the group and sat down at Jeff's side.

"It was too bad about that pass," he said pleasantly.

"I'm a dumbhead."

"You really couldn't be blamed for it; I should have done the same thing myself."

"I was playing rottenly."

"You did finely at first. What made you slump so?"

"I don't know," answered Jeff, sullenly. This was as nearly an absolute untruth as he had ever told. He knew perfectly well.

"Well, pluck up!" said Jack, cheerily. "You haven't got hardened yet. With a good rest over Sunday you'll do better. That kick was a wonder."

Graham's kindness gave Jeff an impetus that carried him through the ordeal of dressing. Later he crawled out to the playground, driven by a consuming curiosity to see how the team fared without him. He must have been abnormally

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charitable if he did not find some gratification in the discovery that Thorne's best punts were little better than his own poor ones, and that Hiatt, however clever in understanding signals, did not distinguish himself in executing them. Newbury was plainly on the defensive; the lack of an effective attack more than offset the superior resisting power of the line.

As he stood frowning upon the scene, he felt a hand laid upon his shoulder, and swinging about, found his brother beside him.

"You here!" exclaimed Jeff in astonishment.

"Yes, I came to see you play. I said I should come if you got on the team."

"Well, they fired me off," said the boy, flushing, "so you might as well have stayed away."

"I am glad I didn't. I have enjoyed the scene in a way — though I don't wholly understand the manœuvres. You will have to explain the rules to me before I witness another game."

These words cast a gleam of sunshine across Jeff's gloomy sky. Sorely as he might feel his own disappointment, if he had stirred Crusty to an interest in something in which the school was interested, he had not labored in vain.

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They watched in silence as Brookfield wore down the stubborn resistance of their opponents, and crept nearer the goal. When a Brookfield back compassed Skillen's end under efficient escort, and brushed past Hiatt across the scoring line, Jeff felt that he had seen enough.

"Let's go," he said. "I've had all I can stand."

In the car they sat for a time without exchanging a word.

Finally the elder brother asked, "What happened to you?"

"I got fooled on a forward pass, and Thorne fired me off," answered Jeff, bitterly.

"I don't mean that. I saw the game from the beginning, and it seemed to me that you played at first extremely well. Some of your punts were delightful to watch, and your dashes into the crowd, while they frightened me, were mostly successful. After the touch-down you seemed to lose your skill."

"I wasn't in condition to play," groaned Jeff.

"Did you hurt yourself?" the brother demanded quickly.

"No, I was just used up. I had had two days of hard work without any preparation, and I was

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lame and tired. I'm surprised that I held out as long as I did."

"Then it was a mistake to go into the game at all." The brother's tones were those of the reproving schoolmaster.

"I know it, but it was my only chance to make good, and I took the risk. The Trowbridge game comes next week. This settles my football all right."

"Do you mean that you are not going to play any more?"

"What's the use! I've had my chance and lost it. After this slump they won't believe I've any sand or brains, and there's no time now to get into condition to prove the contrary. I may as well quit. You'll be glad to have me."

In this utterance Jeff was not sincere. He felt physically weak and battered, and mentally very blue; he expressed himself with exaggerated pessimism. In fact, he had no intention of quitting.

Mr. Richards laid a hand on his brother's knee. "Jeff," he said seriously, "I don't approve that attitude at all. It is not manly or sensible. I didn't want you to play football and I wish still that you had kept out of it; but if there was a

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poor reason for undertaking it at the outset, there is a good one for continuing now that you have begun. You mustn't get the habit of giving up before obstacles or sulking when things go against you."

"Then you want me to keep on?"

"Certainly — unless your studies suffer. Rest for a day or two; then go out and play within your strength, on the second team if they don't want you on the first, but whole-heartedly and without resentment."

"All right, I will!" responded the boy, cheerfully, smiling in spite of his woe at the turn which the conversation had taken. Here was "Crusty" arguing for football. What would the boys have said to that!

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CHAPTER X

DIVIDED COUNSELS

An hour later, Thorne and Rhodes sat in a car going in the same direction, discussing the game and the part played in it by the new recruit. The captain was morose over the defeat which the team had suffered, the coach disappointed but not hopeless.

"I'm done with that Richards!" stormed Thorne. "He's a quitter, — plays beautifully when things go well, and hasn't the pluck of a chicken when we begin to lose. He's one of the good scholars whose brains are useless for anything that's practical. I know that kind of a grand-stand player; there's no fight in 'em, and when the pinch comes, they aren't there."

"Who made the touch-down for us?" asked Rhodes, quietly.

"Henderson Ray, when he slid five yards on his nose and got the ball," answered Thorne. "I know what you mean. That punt was a corker,

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of course, and the fellow made some good rushes up near the goal-line, but what did he do afterwards in the middle of the field? Why, he was weak as water."

"I think that can be explained. We've crowded him too much. He's green and soft, and needs time to get fit."

"Time is just what we haven't got," retorted Thorne, "and it will take something more than time to convert a quitter. If he had any stuff in him, he'd have been out three weeks ago. You'll do what you think best, of course, but I wouldn't risk him, if he could punt a hundred yards."

"What about Hiatt?"

"He has no drive in him, but he knows what's going on, at least."

"And West?"

"Half a man. Hexam was better than Hiatt and West put together. Jack Graham is the only real back we've got."

"And no decent substitutes. We must keep Richards for an emergency, anyway; I think you'll agree to that."

"I suppose so," grumbled Thorne. "He can't be worse than Tibbetts and Dave Beever."

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"We won't quarrel about Richards," said the coach. "I haven't your opinion of him, but the week will show which of us is right. I propose to put him on the second, and have him play on the defensive close to the line. That's where he belongs, not a dozen yards back waiting for forward passes. Then if we have to send him into the game, West will go back to Hiatt's place, when the other side has the ball, and Richards will play close to the line. We'll take him into the signal practice of the first every day, but keep him on the second in the scrimmages. That will give him lots of defensive work, and plenty of chance to harden up. You won't object to this, I'm sure."

"That's all right," agreed the captain, "but you mustn't let him fool you. He's the kind that does well in practice, and shirks in a game."

Jeff's over-Sunday rest alleviated his lameness, but did not wholly restore his strength. He came out for the practice on Monday determined to husband his forces and work himself gradually up into proper condition. Dr. Morgan had read at the opening of school that morning the parable of the forward guest who seized the high place at the wedding feast and then at the coming of the master

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with the more honorable man "began with shame to take the lowest room." Jeff applied the lesson to his own affairs in his own fashion. After one quick descent with shame to the lowest room, he was resolved not to be tempted higher until he was sure he could hold his own against any comer, however honorable.

It is possible that he carried out his purpose too well. He kicked with such reserve that the range of his punts fell off a good third. He kept obstinately to his own side of the line on the defensive and did not presume to do another man's work. The second had the ball but rarely; on the few occasions when he was called upon to buck the line, he did not draw on his whole strength. The result was a performance perhaps above the average grade of the second, but by no means brilliant.

Thorne called the coach aside as the players were ordered in.

"What did I tell you!" he exclaimed in triumph. "Your man didn't do a thing. He's scared blue!"

Rhodes smiled good-naturedly. "I'm not talking for publication. I'll wait and see."

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"You won't see anything different," said Thorne, "if you wait till Christmas!"

When Richards left the dressing-rooms, Rhodes followed him out and, accompanying him two blocks down the street, lingered ten minutes with him at the corner where their ways parted. One result of this talk was that Jeff pursued the course mapped out for him in greater contentment and with a gleam of hope; another appeared next day when he cut everything but the signal practice, and met Thorne's protest by a reference to the higher authority of the coach.

"What have you laid Young Crusty off for?" demanded Thorne, breaking in on Rhodes as he was giving the captain of the second instructions for the day.

"He needs a rest."

"Well, *we* need practice, and practice for us is more important than rest for him."

"I thought you didn't consider him of any use?" returned Rhodes, with a smile of amusement.

"Not in a game, but he's good to buck against in practice."

Thorne's pique did not last long, for the first swept the field that afternoon like a conquering

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army. The signals worked well, the backs clung to the ball when once Burns had put it into their hands, and Hiatt made his distance repeatedly. There was a spirit and dash in the play that filled the captain's heart with joy.

"We're coming, Jack," he cried, as the team trotted in, and smote his trusty on the back to emphasize the sentiment. "The worst is over now. We'll show a solid front to those Trowbridge fellows on Saturday."

Graham displayed no great enthusiasm. "I hope so," he said, "but our second isn't much like the Trowbridge first."

On the morrow Thorne's mood was just the opposite. The second rallied at critical points and held the first. Some of Burns's plays failed to work, and Hiatt was frequently stopped on his cross-bucks. The second kicked whenever they got the ball, and the long punts, annihilating in a few seconds the gain of many minutes, discouraged the school team. Richards was back on the second, covering a line of defence that extended from right guard to left end, and thrusting his sturdy shoulders into many a laboriously made hole. If he did not let himself out, no one suspected the fact from his playing.

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"He knows the signals!" commented Thorne with impatience to the coach. "That's the worst thing about playing first substitutes on the second. 'Most any one can stop a play if he knows where it's coming. Westcott's beat us last year by catching on to the signals."

"I told him not to listen to the signals," Rhodes answered.

"He listened just the same, you can bank on that."

The last line-up before the Trowbridge game came on Thursday. When Jeff first came out, Rhodes asked him how he felt, and on receiving the reply that he was "all right," bade him play for all he was worth, but hold his hands over his ears when Burns gave the signals. The command filled the boy's heart with exultation. His lameness was practically gone; his hardening muscles quivered for the fray. Once more, as on the day of his first appearance, he went into the game with the determined spirit of one who feels that he has a cause to vindicate, a stigma to wipe out; but behind his fierce aggressiveness there was now a sense of enduring strength. Slowly Burns awoke to the unpleasant fact that through the strong

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left flank of his line there was practically no thoroughfare for any one to whom he could give the ball. The square-shouldered back on the second wouldn't be shoved aside by any forerunner; he crashed relentlessly to the heart of the play. Thorne stormed and Burns reviled, but the obstacle refused to be swept aside. The clever quarter was forced to seek out easier avenues of advance.

But before Burns turned aside to these paths of less resistance, the ball had fallen several times into the hands of the second, bringing to Jeff the opportunity to prove his ability to buck the line. After his performance, not even the distrustful captain could doubt that the fellow possessed the makings of a great back, for in him were combined the right physical build, elastic strength, and the knack of shooting himself forward with a maximum muzzle energy. He ran low, keeping his centre of gravity well to the front; as he neared the line, he gathered himself as a long-jumper prepares for his spring. When he dealt his blow, his whole body was like a wedge driven home through easy-splitting wood. His feet took firm hold on the ground; his legs were not mere props,

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but powerful propellers. If he had been tolerably supported and relieved, he might have carried the second to a touch-down. Three times with the help of his feeble line he cut himself an opening between Thorne and Firman and shunted Jack Graham backward his full length. On the weaker side he made longer gains. But the second was short of plays and shorter still of players; ultimately they were forced to kick, and Burns, who had now learned his lesson, by constant hammering on the right side and shrewd use of emergency plays, won his way to a touch-down.

The council of war met after the practice to consider plans for the Trowbridge game. Its official members were Rhodes and Thorne; Burns and Graham were present by invitation of the captain. Jack gave his opinion at once that Richards should start the game at right half; Thorne demurred and Burns seemed in doubt.

"Why, there are more first downs in that fellow than in any man we've got," urged Graham.

"Oh, he *can* play," answered Thorne. "I won't deny that after to-day's game, — but will he?"

"Sometimes he's a savage bull, and at others just an old cow," said Burns. "If I knew which

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he'd be on Saturday, I should know better what to say. He weakened terribly in the Brookfield game."

"That's the point exactly," the captain declared. "If he's just a grand-stand player who does his best work in practice, he'll slump again. We don't want to queer ourselves by a false start."

"We want the man who can make the best gains, don't we?" insisted Graham. "I tell you, young Crusty is the toughest proposition I've come up against this year!"

"Heaven knows I want to play the best man!" exclaimed Thorne. "Why couldn't he have come out when we wanted him, like a decent citizen? We should know something about him then."

Rhodes had listened in silence. He had his own doubts as to Young Crusty, but they were based on reasons wholly different from those advanced by either Thorne or Burns. He simply could not believe that a man who played as he was sure Jeff would play, could last through the game. What he longed for was two Crustys, one to use up in the first half, another to send in fresh after the intermission.

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"We'll start Hiatt," he said. The three words settled the matter.

Let no one suppose that the mass of students held aloof in dumb indifference while the few players pursued their practice, and the leaders, who were fewer, matured their plans. The members of the school, from first to sixth, were mightily concerned in the doings of the team which was to represent them against Trowbridge and Westcott's; they discussed its faults and virtues, its make-up, its guidance, its prospects, with frank and fervid zeal. The appearance of Jeff upon the field, and especially his work during the last two days of practice, aroused the keenest interest. There was a pro-Crusty party, and a party which belittled him. Old Crusty's shortcomings were thrust into the background by the prowess of Young Crusty, who became the hero of the ever present mugwump faction that finds fault with things that are and idealizes those that might be. When the news went the rounds on Friday that Jeff was not to play, a score of fellows assured him that he ought to have Hiatt's place, and that he was not receiving a fair deal. Such expressions might give a sweet coating to the pill which the boy must choke

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down, but they could not change its essential bitterness.

"It's just as well," said Mr. Richards in the evening, when Jeff bewailed his disappointment. "The game will be a hard strain; you will play better next week if you escape it."

"It won't do any good to play better next week, if we lose the game," sighed Jeff.

"They may have to put you in before the end, after all."

"If I don't start, or play a full half, I shan't get my N."

"Oh, that's what you're after, is it?" asked the teacher in surprise. "I thought you wanted to help your school, and get on with the boys."

"I want to play!" Jeff burst out fiercely. "That's what I want."

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CHAPTER XI

JEFF'S CHANCE

THE representatives of the school who accompanied their team to Trowbridge filled two cars and overflowed into a third. Winnie Thorne, Freddy Danvers, Joe McPhail, and Smooch Brown occupied a double seat and were happy. They had banners and peanuts, and knew that their team was going to win. Besides this, three of them had never visited a boarding-school, and they were curious to see what it was like.

"Four profs aboard!" announced Joe, who was a person given to exact information.

"How do you make four?" demanded Winnie. "There's Doc and Haven — they always go — and Long John. Who's the fourth?"

"I know!" exclaimed Freddy. "I saw him get in. It's Crusty."

"What's he here for? He doesn't care anything about athletics."

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"He came to see his brother play," said Smooch.

"Well, he'll be disappointed," Winnie remarked. "Hiatt's going to play."

"It's too bad," said Joe. "Young Crusty can cut circles all around him."

"I think Crusty's better myself," said Winnie, wisely. "I told Russell so, but he wouldn't talk about it. Rhodes decided it."

"They think they can't trust him," asserted Freddy. "It's all tommyrot."

Winnie turned on his pal with scathing sarcasm. "You ought to be coach, you know so much more than anybody else!"

"I'd like to be," was Freddy's cool rejoinder. "I'd chuck Hiatt and Skillen the first day."

"Oh, talk of something else," broke in Joe. "That's a stale subject. — Say, Smooch, is it true the little fellows have to sleep in pens up there at Trowbridge?"

The conversation ran on from cubicles to the joys of life in a boarding-school, about which opinions differed. After this they quizzed Joe about his guinea pigs, and adverted to various happenings by land and sea that had come within their short but vivid careers. A picture puzzle, which

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Freddy had acquired as a premium at a confectioner's, occupied their attention during the remainder of the short journey.

The Trowbridge authorities usually insisted that games should be played on the home grounds. By way of counterbalancing this somewhat selfish policy, they were always generous in the payment of the expenses of visiting teams, and most hospitable in their welcome. The Newbury teachers were given side-line badges, *honoris causa*. The result was that Mr. Richards found himself for the first time in his life grouped with the football veterans, experts, and officials, apart from the common crowd. He sought out Jeff, feeling more at home at his side in the strange surroundings.

"That's their punter, Rodman," said Jeff, as the Trowbridge team came on the field, and one of their number, a tall, solidly built fellow, lifted a kick high in the air. "He's supposed to be very good."

"I have seen you do better than that, have I not?" returned Mr. Richards.

"I don't know. You can't tell about him till you've seen him in a game. That short fellow talking with Thorne is Ricker, their captain. He's

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a half-back, and very fast, I believe, but they say he's not so good this year as last. A man usually doesn't play as well when he's captain. Our fellows will try hard to keep Ricker from breaking loose."

"Breaking loose?" repeated Mr. Richards, puzzled.

"Getting away from the crowd with a clear field in front of him," explained Jeff.

"They look bigger than our boys."

"The other team always looks bigger."

Thorne now made two or three trial kicks, receiving the ball on passes from Hewin.

"Thorne seems to kick well, too," remarked Mr. Richards.

"It will be a stand-off between him and Rodman. Doesn't Hewin pass beautifully!"

"I had not noticed the passing," answered Mr. Richards. "I took that for granted."

Jeff smiled. His brother had never stood, as he had done, behind the wobbly Newbury second, waiting impatiently for the ball, and not knowing whether it was coming eight feet high or on the ground. He did not attempt to explain, however, for Trowbridge was running through signals

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in the section of the field near him, and his attention was riveted on the movements of the rival team. They did look dangerous, these stalwart, quick-moving Trowbridge lads, and they certainly had a varied assortment of plays. Was it possible that the high hopes of Newbury were to be disappointed?

A few minutes later the ball was resting on its tee of earth in the middle of the field, and the teams were in their positions. The kick-off had fallen to Trowbridge. Thorne gave a last look at his men, and declared himself ready. The referee's whistle cut the air with a shrill call to action. Before the thrill which it excited ceased to be felt in the responsive hearts of the spectators, the ball came spinning down to the corner of the field. West caught it, dropped it, picked it up again, carried it forward a dozen yards, and sank under the overpowering rush. The lines formed quickly. Burns's signal, which rang clear across the field, told Jeff as well as the team that the pet play of Graham through left tackle was to begin the advance. The full-back dashed forward, cleared the line, and swooped kitelike to the ground eight yards beyond it. Hiatt struggled

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ahead three yards, and the linesmen moved their measuring rods. Two minutes later they were pushed forward again.

"Dead easy!" chirruped Winnie Thorne in an interval of the cheering. "They can't stop us."

"All we have to do is to keep it up," commented Freddy, joyfully, as if keeping it up were merely a matter of patience and time. "Why don't those fellows on the side-lines get down, so that we can see something!"

The quartette started a chant of "Down in front! down in front!" While they were thus insisting on the right to a full view of the feats of their heroes, the heroes were finding difficulty in performing the feats. Hiatt gained three yards again, but Thorne, who was called round to take the ball, could make but two. On the third down the captain fell back, with hands outstretched, for a kick.

"The fake is dangerous there," thought Jeff, as he heard the signal. "He'd better kick."

The outcome justified the substitute's fears. The ball went to Burns, who passed it to Graham and fell in behind him to force him through. But West, who had gone ahead to clear the way, got

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tangled in the line; Thorne was blocked off by the ends, who had run down, and the heavy pressure was lacking when fifty pounds more would have carried the play triumphantly through. Trowbridge had the ball on downs, on Newbury's forty-yard line.

The first move gave no indication of any great offensive strength on the part of the home team. Rodman made a savage lunge at centre, but was brought to the ground by Firman and Hewin without the help of the secondary defence. When the ball was snapped again, it was passed from one back to another behind the Trowbridge line, and the left end went down the field. Thorne guessed a forward pass and yelled a warning that sent his own secondary defence backward. He broke through himself and pressed hard after the ball, only to see Ricker slip through with it outside the Newbury right tackle and slant away with terrific speed towards the waiting half-back. Hiatt made a frantic dive, but the Trowbridge end took the brunt of the tackle, and his mate went by. Ricker had broken loose!

The finest sight of a football game is a solitary runner bearing alone the hopes of his team, as he

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sprints in the open before the scattered pack. Every heart thrills at the spectacle, but the long howl of joy that rises spontaneously from one side of the field finds but a weak counterpart in the dirge of sighs breathed by the opposite ranks. On sped Ricker directly at the waiting quarter. For a moment it seemed as if he meant to charge his last obstacle directly in front. Burns thought so himself, and was ready for the assault; but the runner swerved outside again, and the Newbury quarter, driving himself along the shorter arc, leaped at the critical instant and brought his quarry down.

Nine yards to a touch-down! Every nerve in Jeff's body was a-quiver with eagerness to share that last stand. He could do nothing but tremble and hope. The Trowbridge quarter knew well which was the weak side of the Newbury line. Rodman ploughed his way between Weeks and Pingree and over Hiatt, five hateful yards. A triumphant swoop inside Skillen brought fate three yards nearer. Then Ricker took a hand again, and buried himself in the heap that struggled on the goal-line. A screech of the whistle, a fit of dancing and yelling that began

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with the players nearest the referee and swept instantly along the whole Trowbridge front — and Newbury understood that the odds from now on were heavily against her.

"Whose fault was it?" asked Mr. Richards, whose training as a schoolmaster had given him a keen scent for errors.

"No one's in particular," Jeff replied. "They weakened all round. Ricker deserves the credit of the touch-down, I think."

And yet he could not help feeling that even after Ricker's great run, the last ditch might have been more successfully defended. A stronger man than Hiatt might have thrown Rodman back, and two yards rescued from the first long gain might have become a margin of safety at the goal-line. Still Hiatt was only negatively at fault; coach and captain were evidently satisfied with his work.

When the touch-down had been converted into a goal, the teams lined up again, Thorne electing to take the kick-off. This choice gave the ball to the other side, but started the play in Trowbridge territory. Here it remained for some minutes, until Trowbridge, having worked back to the forty-

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yard line, was forced to kick, and Burns got the ball. He kept it over two first downs, when Ray's over-eagerness took him prematurely across the scrimmage line. The five yards thus lost added to the five still to be gained, made it necessary to punt or use an emergency play. As the Trowbridge backs evidently expected the former, Burns determined on an onside kick, hoping to put the ball into Ray's hands. Either the kick was too long or Ray too slow, for Rodman reached the ball just ahead of the Newbury end, and Ray could do no better than down his rival on the spot. Then, after two insignificant gains, Crane of Trowbridge made a long forward pass to his right end, who got it safely behind Hiatt and ran to the Newbury twenty-five-yard line.

Dr. Morgan joined the Crustys as the jubilant followers of Trowbridge raised their chanting call for a touch-down. He had found some difficulty in escaping from the hospitable attentions of the Trowbridge head-master. The attitude of the intellectual superior who condescends to a perfunctory interest in the sports of the youth under his charge was never to Dr. Morgan's liking. He wanted to be with his boys, especially when, as

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now, the tide of battle was running against them.

"It looks bad, doesn't it, Richards?" he said, giving Jeff a nod, but addressing his brother. "Do you think we can hold them?"

"I'm afraid not," was the frank answer.

"Oh, we must!" exclaimed the headmaster, nervously. "I still think our team is the better one."

While he spoke, Ricker, with a leap and a dart, carried the ball four yards ahead.

"Dear, dear!" cried Dr. Morgan, forlornly. "I wish you were there, Jeff."

"I wish I was!" answered Jeff, detaching himself sufficiently from the spectacle to appreciate the fact that Dr. Morgan had addressed him by his first name.

At this moment the Newbury coach strode up to the group, his face tense with anxiety.

"Go in, Richards!" he commanded, speaking quickly but with creditable coolness. "Send Hiatt out. Take West's place on the defensive and *stop those rushes*. Tell Burns to punt when he gets the ball. Drive it as far as you can."

In an instant Jeff had peeled off his sweater.

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He tossed it into his brother's arms and turned to obey.

"Report to the referee!" added Rhodes. Meantime a Trowbridge back had wormed his way three yards through Thorne's side of the line. Hopeless as the outlook now appeared to the Newbury watchers, Jeff's advent on the field revived their courage and called out a shout of welcome which the cheer-leaders hastened to transform into a personal cheer for Hiatt and one for his supplanter. Jeff did not hear either. He made his report, delivered his messages, and took his place behind Weeks. He thought he knew what the next move would be. Rodman would take the ball, Rodman the line-bucker, who had never failed to make his three yards — Rodman the punter. He would come straight for the right side of the Newbury line, with Ricker and Jenks driving from behind. Rodman against Richards in a strenuous tilt, afterwards perhaps a duel at punting. Jeff stamped his cleats into the earth and waited.

The ball went back. The Newbury forwards charged as it moved. Weeks and Pingree, struggling frantically, were forced apart, and between

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them appeared the leather-capped head of Rodman bowed over the tightly clutched ball. The way was clear — except for one, but that one shot forward and met with lowered shoulder at full momentum the hostile charge. The glorious advance of the Trowbridge back ended abruptly, with a shock that sent his two supporters sprawling to the ground. Rodman went down in his tracks.

"Newbury's ball, first down!" called the referee. Jeff's ears were deaf to the cheering of his schoolmates, as he stood within touch of the goal-post anxiously waiting for Hewin's pass. His mind was centred on his task. He knew exactly what kind of a kick he meant to make — one of Jim Walters's "scooters." So intent was he on the problem of his punt that he took no thought for the Trowbridge forwards, who came tearing down upon him. One of them knocked him off his balance just after the ball had left his boot, but helped him up immediately and panted an apology. Jeff, who cared little for one fall more or less, answered he knew not what. His gaze was following his kick down the field. Long and low and far-carrying, the ball sailed over the head of the Trowbridge quarter and bounded away. By the time

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it was captured and its captor himself captured, and the lines had formed for a new joust, the first half was at an end.

We cannot tarry over the exclamations of disgust and self-accusation which the Newbury players exchanged in the dressing-rooms as they breathed themselves between heats. Thorne showed to his mates a determined front, but his real feelings appeared when he talked with Jeff.

"They've had it on us so far," he said. "If we do anything now, you'll have to help us to it."

"I'll do my best," answered Jeff.

"Do you think you can hold out?" asked the captain, fearfully. "We've no one now to take your place."

"I'm sure I can!" returned Jeff. "I wasn't in condition to play in the Brookfield game," he added. "I feel very different now."

Rhodes and Burns joined them. "You must do something to drive those Trowbridge backs away from the line," declared the coach. "You can't rush the ball from your forty-yard line. Punt when you're in your own territory, and try Jack's forward pass occasionally when you're farther

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down the field. Never mind if you do lose the ball. You must keep them guessing."

"Anything you say," responded the captain, humbly. Twenty minutes of fruitless struggle had dealt a hard blow to his self-confidence.

The coach continued: "Richards here is fresh and can stand a good deal of work. Don't be afraid to use him." He paused, lifted his eyes to the doorway, and muttered an exclamation of disgust. Mr. John Smith had arrived.

"Well! well! well!" exclaimed the graduate in gruff, but, as he supposed, cheery, tones. "This will never do. Buck up, boys, buck up! I want to see a couple of touch-downs this half."

"So do we," answered Thorne.

"You're playing too ladylike; make it rougher. Lay out Ricker, now, and you'll have it your own way. Give him the knee as he comes through the line. Twist his leg when he's under the pile. There are no end of things you can do to him without the umpire catching you at it."

"So long as I am coach, we'll play clean foot-ball!" interposed Rhodes, sharply.

"Oh, I believe in clean foot-ball," Mr. Smith made haste to explain. "I don't mean for you

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to hurt him. Just discourage him — scare him. You fellows are too easy. You want to put more hate into it. Slam 'em down hard."

If he had had full opportunity, President John might perhaps have explained the inconsistency in his remarks; but the call to arms interrupted him. "Pay no attention to Smith's talk," Thorne exhorted his men when they were outside. "Fight for all you're worth, but I won't stand for any roughing the backs."

Once more Thorne kicked off — the last time his foot was destined to touch the ball during the game. Trowbridge punted it back after a futile attempt by Ricker to get around Skillen's end. Burns was held at the very middle of the field. Mindful of his instructions, the Newbury quarter spent a down in trying out his new half-back, then gave the signal for a kick. Jeff's high-climbing punt dropped ten yards in front of the Trowbridge goal. The goal-keeper ran the ball back across a single white line, and fell before Thorne's onslaught.

Again the Newbury right, supported by a powerful half, held its own. Trowbridge could take no risks with the battle raging before her very

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gates, and Rodman punted. Burns ran the kick back beyond mid-field, then gave it to Jeff. This time his drive was too strong; the Trowbridge quarter let the ball cross the goal-line, touched it down and brought it back for a kick-out, where, after a losing rush, Rodman kicked again. West, securing the punt, carried it well forward before the delayed Trowbridge tacklers could get their arms about him. Jeff drove another high one far down the field.

"They've got a real man against 'em now!" chuckled Winnie, squirming with joy upon his seat. "Did you ever see anything like that Crusty's punts!"

"What good do they do?" demanded Freddy. "You can't score on a punt. What we want is to score."

"They bring the team down to where they can score, you idiot!" Winnie retorted. "You wait and see."

Other impatient spectators on the Newbury side were asking the same question. It was all very beautiful, but of what use as long as Trowbridge kept the ball away from her own goal-line! This fruitless kicking was using up precious time

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that might be spent in rushing. Burns was playing just the game Trowbridge wanted. Why didn't he stop swapping punts, and plug the line!

While they grumbled, the cause of their discontent was suddenly removed. Forced to kick on his own goal-line, and worried by the sight of the Newbury rushers streaming through upon him, Rodman punted hastily and drove the ball out of bounds on his forty-yard line. Burns recognized that his opportunity had come. Richards crashed through behind Thorne six yards. Jack Graham took five more. West failed to get round the end, but Jeff managed to eat his way five yards again into the press. On the next signal he fell back as for a try at goal. The Trowbridge forwards put on full steam to break through and spoil the try, but Burns took the ball and passed it to Graham, who sent it ahead to Ray. It was not a long pass nor a very glorious one, but it went to its mark, and Ray carried the ball some distance before he was downed.

For the thirteen yards that remained, Burns took ample time. Jack darted through outside left tackle, and with Jeff to hold him up, and Ray and Thorne tugging at his side, staggered six yards

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forward. Jeff hurled himself to the right of centre, cutting into the mass of defenders like an icicle falling from the eaves into soft snow. He left a windrow of prostrate bodies behind him marking his trail. With a first down to start from, and but two yards to go, only a fumble could prevent a touch-down. Another determined rush and the ball was over!

Six and six! The Newburyites howled and cheered and clamored for another touch-down. They had no doubt that it would come. My readers probably cherish the same expectation. The struggle veered back and forth from Newbury's thirty-yard line to Trowbridge's ten, but the touch-down came not. Though the home team was manifestly on the defensive, with the help of luck and his own trusty foot, Rodman managed to hold the foe at bay. The referee's whistle saved Trowbridge at the last, for Richards and Graham were going once more, and Newbury had the ball fifteen yards from victory. The game was a tie.

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CHAPTER XII

OLD CRUSTY TURNS STRATEGIST

A DRAWN match is sometimes looked upon as a victory for the side which before the contest was considered the weaker. This is especially the case where the match stands alone, itself the climax of the season's training, like the annual Yale-Harvard football game. To the casual spectator it would appear that the result of the affair at Trowbridge was on the whole encouraging to either side. Each by winning its game with Wescott's might still gain the championship, or, at the worst, tie for it; while a defeat, even if followed by a victory over Westcott's, would have made a triple tie the most favorable issue possible. Thorne, however, was by no means satisfied to take this complacent view of the situation. He had brought his team to Trowbridge to win the game. The last half had proved that the game might have been won. He was confident that if it could be

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played over again, Newbury could not only prevent a touch-down by Trowbridge, but double their own score. He reproached himself bitterly for his short-sightedness.

"We ought to be thankful to get off as we have," said Rhodes, as the captain, worn in body from the effects of the long struggle, and depressed in mind by a consciousness of failure, stared morosely out of the car window. "If Richards hadn't gone in when he did, you'd have had another touch-down against you, and there'd be no tie game."

Thorne shuddered. "It was a close call!" Then a smile of comforting reminiscence broke over his lips and a flash of feeling lighted his eyes. "Oh, but that Young Crusty is a corker!" he exclaimed, repeating a sentiment which he had already expressed a score of times. "I'll never forget the way he crumpled up that Trowbridge line. I'd slap through the best I could so as to get over to help him, and there he'd be, butting his way ahead, all alone, with ever so many Trowbridge men around him. I couldn't get near him. That fellow's got me on my knees all right. Here I've been calling him a quitter and a grand-stand player, and only gave him half a show, and he

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comes in when we've almost lost the game and saves it for us."

"I'm more at fault than you are," said the coach, "for I believed in him and you did not. The simple fact was that he overdid at the beginning and had to have time to get in shape again. —I don't suppose you'll be afraid now to play him regularly on the first," he added slyly.

"Afraid! I guess not! If he keeps on as he was going to-day, the school will be worshipping Old Crusty for bringing him here."

"After all, I'm not sure that we've managed so very badly," said the coach after an interval. "I don't believe that he could have lasted through two full halves, playing as he does. We might have put him in earlier, but Hiatt seemed to be doing pretty well, and I wanted to save Richards for an emergency."

"Don't you think he will be able to play through the Westcott game?" asked Thorne, anxiously.

"That comes two weeks from to-day, doesn't it?" mused Rhodes. "We must see what we can do. Richards isn't like the rest of you. He spends his energy wholesale — pulls it off in great chunks. That's why he's such a good line-smasher. He

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isn't a great deal stronger than Hiatt, but he gives three times as much of himself at every stroke, and naturally he uses himself up three times as fast. We shall have to watch him carefully. He's a man who needs a trainer."

"We've simply got to have him able to play the whole Westcott game," urged Thorne. "They have two splendid ends. They say Dunn is every bit as good as Ray, and Hardie outclasses any end in the league. McDowell, the quarter, dodges like a monkey, and drops goals from the thirty-yard line. We shall have to make our gains through the centre of the line from tackle to tackle. That's just Young Crusty's game."

Presently Thorne strolled down the aisle to the seat in which were the Richards brothers.

"Well, sir, what did you think of it?" he asked, as he raised his cap to the teacher.

"I enjoyed it," replied Mr. Richards, with no display of enthusiasm, "though the tension was rather painful at times. I hope you all came through without injury."

"Skillen got a twisted ankle, — we took him out, you know, near the end, — but it doesn't amount to much; and Jack seems to be generally bruised.

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That's all the damage I know about. Your brother doesn't show much sign of wear, does he?"

Mr. Richards glanced at the supremely happy face beside him. "I had to help him up the steps of the car," he said gravely. "He is pretty well used up."

"Oh, he'll be all right after a night's rest," declared Thorne, hastily. "You must be proud of the work he did to-day. Everybody was delighted with it. Some of the fellows from college who were out said he'll be sure to make the freshman team if he keeps up the form he showed to-day."

"I'm sorry to hear that," replied Mr. Richards.

An awkward silence ensued. Thorne did not know how to adjust his ideas to the teacher's point of view, and Jeff's brain was stagnant. Mr. Richards relieved the situation by remarking, "I fear there won't be much studying by the team to-night."

Thorne laughed. "I'm afraid not, nor to-morrow either. You'll have to be easy with us on Monday."

"I don't know why I should be. School work should come before everything."

"You expect too much," answered Thorne,

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boldly. "It isn't natural for a boy to work all the time. We have to have some variety."

"I suppose so," assented the teacher with good-nature. "Variety is said to be the spice of life, but spice is wholesome only in small quantities."

As this seemed a propitious point at which to break off the conversation, Thorne touched his cap again and departed. "I wonder what kind of a kid Crusty was when he was at school!" he thought, as he staggered back to his seat. "I'll bet he was a wallflower. It's queer that he should have a brother who can play football."

Jeff was shrewd enough to have an immaculate Latin lesson for the next recitation with his brother. Dr. Morgan's Greek suffered in consequence, but the head-master was disposed to be lenient with football fellows on the first day after a game. Mr. Richards, pleased by the compliments which enthusiasts bestowed on Jeff, and flattered by the belief that his brother was giving the school an object lesson in maintaining high scholarship amid the distractions of athletics, was growing reconciled to the new order of things. The face into which he looked at night across the study table bore no trace of the dismal apathy

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which had marked it a fortnight before. Eager, vivacious, full of the joy of life, overflowing with good-will and affection, the boy swept the austere pedant into the current of his own thought. To his surprise, Mr. Richards found himself viewing with the eyes of a schoolboy what he had heretofore seen only through a schoolmaster's spectacles.

Jeff talked football; so, too, Mr. Richards, when once he had learned the vocabulary. He became the pupil, Jeff the teacher; the lessons covered the rules, the methods of attack and defence, the particular problems of the Westcott game. When his brother's comprehension failed, Jeff drew diagrams of plays and movements.

"Where do these plays come from?" demanded Mr. Richards.

"From everywhere. Some of them the team had last year; the new ones Rhodes got from the coaches in Cambridge."

"When a new play is invented, I suppose it is passed about, like the news of a new comet."

Jeff laughed. "Not much! it's kept a secret until some one steals it. Rhodes couldn't get the simplest Harvard play from the coaches, but they'll give him the Yale and Dartmouth plays,

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which are just as good. They send men to the chief games to study the playing, and then plan out a special defence against every team."

"Why don't you invent your own plays?"

"It's better to take those that have been proved successful and change them to suit the needs of the team. Rhodes is trying to do something like that for the Westcott game. Westcott's has great ends, and we must keep the ball out of their reach. We had a new skin-tackle play to-day, but it was too complicated. What we want is something sure, easy to learn, and so hard to trace that it can be repeated again and again." Jeff stopped a moment and then added jestingly, "Invent that kind of a play for us, and you'll be a great man."

To Jeff's consternation Mr. Richards took the suggestion seriously. He read and reread the rules until he thought he understood the limitations which they imposed upon the game. He toiled two or three times through a little pamphlet entitled "How to Play Football," getting Jeff's explanations on the knotty points. Every afternoon he followed the practice along the side-lines and checked off his newly gained information by observations on the field. The boys passed round

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many a jest on Crusty's suddenly developed ardor for football. Some accused him of seeking an excuse for taking his brother out; others declared that Jeff's success had turned Crusty's head. They watched for his coming day by day. Occasionally one would accept the challenge of his mates and with roguishly artful words seek to draw the teacher out. Jeff, who understood his brother's object and appreciated fully the hopelessness of any good result from the meddling of an amateur with matters of which he knew nothing, was greatly alarmed. If the fellows once learned what Crusty was driving at, he would become an object of ridicule; and to have one's relatives laughed at is far harder than to have them disliked. He plucked up courage one night to utter a warning.

"I hope you won't let the fellows catch on to what you are trying to do," he said, striving anxiously to avoid offence. "I'm afraid they would think . . ."

"What?"

"Well, that you were interfering."

Mr. Richards gave him a shrewd look. "I'm not going to advertise my folly to the world. If

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I happen on anything worth while, you may have it; if I don't, no one will be the wiser."

Soon the new plays began to travel across the table for criticism. Some were so intricate that no team could carry them out; others would require too much time or were too easy to block, or unsuited to the eleven. Two or three that seemed possible proved to be but poor variations of stock plays. Mr. Richards went on contriving; Jeff continued to reject.

"I wouldn't spend any more time on it," said the boy one evening late in the week. "It isn't in your line."

"I'm not going to give it up now," replied the brother; "it has become an obsession, like a mathematical puzzle. I don't believe all the good plays have been invented any more than all the good tunes have been composed. Why shouldn't I hit on something as well as some one else?"

"Because you can't," Jeff answered bluntly.

Late in the evening the amateur play-maker shoved another diagram across the table. "That's the only possible one you've produced yet," commented Jeff, looking up in surprise. "That will work, and it makes use of our strong points; but

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it's too easy to diagnose. After we've used it once or twice, Westcott's will know all about it. You must mask it."

"Give it back to me," cried the delighted designer. "I'll see if I can mask it. Great inventions are not completed in a moment. . . . It is time for football players to be in bed; pedagogues and puzzle-cranks are privileged to sit up."

Monday was a blue day for the football men at Newbury Latin. On Saturday Westcott's had beaten Trowbridge by a score of nine to nothing. The pessimists throughout the school saw the fatal handwriting on the wall. Westcott's would win the championship, with Newbury and Trowbridge tied for second place. Rhodes came to the practice feeling a depression which he tried hard not to show. Richards met him with a paper in his hand.

"I've a new play here which I'd like to show you," he said. "It may be what we want."

"Where did you get it?" asked the coach, as he studied the diagram.

"If it goes well, I'll tell you; if it doesn't, I won't. You see it starts from a shift. Either Jack or I can carry the ball, and it works on either

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side without much change in the signal. There's a word signal that goes with it. 'Left over' means that left end shifts alone; 'over left' means end and tackle. The two words sound about the same, and the change will be confusing."

"It looks good to me," said Rhodes. "We'll try it, anyway."

"Give us a long signal practice, then," pleaded Jeff. "It's got to be well learned."

Rhodes mastered the play himself, then called the team together at one end of the field, where he explained it with great care, while Perrin, with a posse of police organized impromptu, kept the crowd out of earshot. At first the coach made the team walk through the play; when they understood it, he pushed them faster. At the end of half an hour they were executing it fairly well.

There was no doubt that the new play worked splendidly against the second, but the second, at the tail end of the season, possessed no great power of resistance. At Jeff's request, he was transferred to the weaker side and Hiatt put in his place. He found the formation extremely hard to stop. A good line back could do little more than keep the gains down.

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"I'll tell you what we'll do," proposed Rhodes after the practice. "On Wednesday I'll bring out a team of graduates to Howard's field, where there'll be no spies. If we can work this play on the graduates, it will go." "Now where did you get it?" he demanded, turning on Jeff.

"If it's successful in the Westcott game, I'll tell you," answered Jeff with a grin. "It didn't come out of a book, and Westcott's hasn't got it. That's all I'll say."

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CHAPTER XIII

THE WESTCOTT GAME

THE players were on the field, impatient to escape the unnerving strain of waiting which drags equally on composure and confidence. Both teams had run through their signals; now, while the captains conferred with the referee and the bulk of the Newbury eleven stood huddled in a depressed group at the side-lines exchanging subdued comments, Richards was receiving passes from his centre and punting to West and Burns against the wind, which blew freshly from the east. Sooner or later he must face that wind; it was the part of wisdom to get used to it while he could. The vexing problem absorbed Jeff's attention completely, leaving him no leisure to waste in magnifying the apparent strength of the foe or in dwelling on the known weaknesses of his own side. Thorne's call brought him to the middle of the field.

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"We've got to kick off," exclaimed the captain, as he built up a little foundation of earth to support the ball. "I'd rather have the wind, but Rhodes told me to take the kick if I won the toss."

"The wind will be with us the second half, anyway," responded Jeff. "We can make it go."

"We've got to make it go!" returned Thorne, savagely. "You'll have to see that Burns keeps well back when they kick. The ball will sail under this wind like a kite."

The referee's whistle blew. Thorne threw a glance along his line to make sure that every one[1] was safely on side, and ran forward for his kick. The wind, tugging against the ball as it turned end over end down the field, pulled it down on the twenty-yard line into McDowell's hands. Skillen was close upon the Westcott quarter as he gathered in the ball, but the clever dodger eluded him and ran ten yards before falling into Ray's arms. On the first attack on the vulnerable side of the Newbury line a hole opened between Weeks and Pingree through which Horr, with the help of

[1] The Newbury Eleven: line from left to right, Ray, Thorne, Firman, Hewin, Weeks, Pingree, Skillen; quarter-back, Burns; half-backs, West, Richards; full-back, Graham.

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Perkins, advanced six yards before Richards crashed into the pair and dropped the runner. A bold attempt at Newbury's left end came to naught when Ray turned the charge in on Thorne, who threw the bearer of the ball on the starting-line.

The Westcott quarter wasted no time in giving the ball to his half to kick. While the Newbury backs were speeding to their places, the ball rose from behind the line, and, buoyed up by the wind, sailed over Burns's head. He ran back for it as it bounced along the ground, picked it up at the twenty-yard line, and succeeded in dodging back a dozen yards toward his opponents' goal. Here Hardie threw him so violently that the ball slipped from his grasp. A Westcott player hurled himself upon it as a hawk pounces upon a hare. The ball was in Westcott's hands on Newbury's thirty-two-yard line!

"And we haven't had a single chance at it!" mourned Perrin, who stood guard over the pail and sponge at the side-line. "Do you think they can rush it over?"

"No!" answered Rhodes, shortly, "but they may try for goal. I'm scared of that McDowell."

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The first rush at the weak Newbury right yielded three yards. A second attempt at the centre was stopped without gain. McDowell fell back as if to kick, but, instead, he made a short forward pass to Dunn that just covered the required distance. Thorne crushed a drive at his side of the line; an assault on the other wing shattered on Jeff's solid shoulder. Again the Westcott quarter went back.

"It's no fake this time!" muttered Rhodes. "If he fails, we're saved."

It seemed as if the clever kicker must fail, for the Newbury forwards burst through all along the line. Thorne shot forward the instant the ball moved and, caroming off Horr's shoulder, leaped into the air with high-stretched arms; but the ball, rising from McDowell's toe, escaped them by a foot. The players halted in their tracks, spell-bound, and watched the ball float towards the goal-posts. It settled squarely on the cross-bar, bounded lightly — and fell behind the goal-line.

And now Newbury's turn had come, though at high cost. Thorne, boiling with resentment, like a tiger scratched by a bullet, with a word of comfort to the disgusted Burns and a heavily loaded exhortation to his men, prepared for the kick-off.

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The look on the captain's face, the convulsive movements of his hands as he formed his tee, were stronger in their effect on the team than words. Not one of the Newbury players but burned with passionate eagerness to retrieve the loss.

This time the ball fell barely ten yards in front of the goal-posts. McDowell worked it back to the twenty-yard line where Pingree, who was fast, if not strong, drove him into Ray's clutches. Horr, trying to round the Newbury right end, achieved nothing more than a run across the field. The clump of backs that pushed over Pingree made but four yards. Perkins kicked, and the ball, checked by the wind, fell safely into Burns's arms just beyond the middle of the field.

Here, with his first chance at the offensive, Burns gave the Crusty play a trial. Jack Graham carried the ball, Jeff was just in front of him, while Burns and West feinted vigorously on the other side. Before his legs were swept from under him, Jack had covered ten yards. Thorne pulled Burns aside and panted into his ear, "Don't try that again here! save it till we are nearer the line."

But the substitute plays did not work as well. West, trying outside tackle, was forced in by

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Hardie. Richards plunged through left of centre across a second white line, but Thorne had started too soon, and the umpire's penalty made further rushing hopeless. For the first time since the game began, Jeff was called upon to kick. His high-soaring punt, borne on the wings of the wind, covered forty yards, yet gave the ends full opportunity to reach their prey. McDowell had barely started when the Newbury men were upon him.

Soon Perkins was compelled to kick again, and Burns, after sending a single charge into the line, once more fell back on Jeff's foot. The Newbury back punted toward the side of the field over which Rice stood guard. The Westcott player juggled the ball just long enough to waste his chance to run it back. Pingree threw him after he had taken a single step.

Perrin was jubilant. "They're on the defensive now," he exclaimed. "We're forcing them right back on their goal-line."

"They're tricky," said Rhodes. "See them try Skillen's end!"

McDowell did try the end, but not Skillen's. The result was a loss, for Thorne, who was watching the ball like a cat at a mouse-hole, slapped his

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way through, and downed the runner behind the line. Jeff crashed into a slow-moving mass play on the right and pulled the plunger to earth. Perkins fell back to kick.

"Through on him, now!" yelled Thorne. "Block that kick!"

The appeal served both to spur on his own men and to worry the punter. As the ball moved, Firman hurled himself forward, twisted aside his opponent, and leaped high in front of Perkins's swinging leg. The Newbury man's arms, intercepting the ball as it rose, beat it to the ground. McDowell and Ray both dived for it as it bobbed across the goal-line, but McDowell was underneath when they came down. The nimble quarter-back had turned the hoped for touch-down into a safety!

"Never mind," shouted Thorne, as his disappointed men drew up on the twenty-five-yard line. "We'll make it yet."

"Only two points." Perrin was sighing over his water-pail. "That's nothing at all."

The next few plays were destined to increase his gloom. Perkins, forced to punt, and worried by the fierce downward charge of Thorne and Pingree, kicked feebly over the centre of the line.

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The ball struck the ground out of reach of every Newbury back. Bumpus, the Westcott guard, galloping blindly up the field, found it in his path and dropped upon it. Encouraged by the success of this unintentional on-side kick, Westcott's gathered headway and made a first down. Halted at last forty yards from the Newbury goal, McDowell shifted left end and tackle to the other side of the line and fell back into the kicking position.

Thorne gave a single glance at his back-field, called a warning, and settled down to his work. Jeff had hardly a doubt that the play would be an on-side kick or a forward pass over the right side of the Westcott line. He doubted still less when the Westcott linemen sifted through and scattered toward West, who was in position twenty yards back. Instinctively Jeff joined in the movement, but as he glanced over his shoulder to catch the direction of the kick, he discovered the ball bearing toward the other side of the field, with Dunn and Rice speeding down beneath it.

It was a cleverly planned play that seemed sure of success. Such a kick, however, must be most accurately timed and placed. Fortunately for Newbury, Jack Graham had not been drawn out

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of his position; unfortunately for Westcott's, the kick was too far out and too low. Jack took the ball on its first bounce, held Dunn off with the straight arm as the latter essayed to tackle him, and, with a free field before him, sprinted forty yards before McDowell forced him out.

"Now for a touch-down," gasped Thorne into the ear of his quarter-back. "Any play that will work. Jeff on a cross-buck between Firman and me can 'most always make four yards."

But Burns clung to the Crusty play. With a knot of supporters round him, Jeff kept his feet over fully eleven yards. Again the play, with the ball gripped in Jack's arms, covered six yards. West gained two through centre, and Jeff ate his way almost alone through the weak right side well past the mark of a first down. Then, to vary his attack, Burns sent Jack round Ray's end, expecting little, but gaining ten precious yards. On Rhodes's diagonal mass play, Jeff went two-thirds as far. Again West achieved his two, and Jack planted the ball for a first down on Westcott's eight-yard line. Newbury hopes fell as Bumpus cut in on the mass play from the side and downed Jack after a single yard of gain. Then Burns,

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dropping all fancy plays, threw himself upon the personal power of his best man. Inside Firman Jeff rammed his way half the distance to the coveted mark. Again Burns put the ball into his hands. A dash, a leap, a splitting shock, a heavy drive of the solid legs — and Jeff forged across the goal-line with the Westcottites clinging to him like driftwood carried along on the stem of an advancing towboat.

Thorne's kick for goal turned out badly. The failure put new hope into the Westcott following, for a touch-down even without a goal would yield a margin for victory, and the Westcottites still built upon Horr's speed and McDowell's cleverness and the known weakness of the Newbury right. As the ball sailed outside the posts, Rhodes gave a start and growled an exclamation. Turning abruptly, he jostled against a man in a heavy ulster, with a red side-line badge dangling from his buttonhole.

"I beg your pardon," said Rhodes, giving a poke at his cap as he recognized Mr. Richards.

"Seven to three, isn't it?" asked the teacher, eagerly. "You call that a safe margin, don't you?"

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"It's a margin, but another point would have made it safer."

"How is the new play working?"

Rhodes stared for a moment, unpleasantly surprised that Crusty should know anything about the new play. Young Crusty had evidently been talking. The discovery jarred on the coach's sense of propriety.

"You mean the one your brother gave us?" he answered coldly. "Very well, so far. That play and Jack's long run and your brother's rushes got us the touch-down. But if Burns keeps on using it as recklessly as he has done, it won't be good much longer. They'll stop it short when they get on to it."

"How?"

"By keeping their guard in his place instead of letting him go through," Rhodes snapped out, annoyed at being held up by what he conceived to be the idle questioning of an ignoramus.

"I see," said Mr. Richards, quietly.

The coach took a step away, but wheeled immediately about. "How long can that brother of yours keep this up?"

The teacher shook his head. "I can't tell.

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He's likely to play his strength out before he knows it."

"That's what I'm afraid of," said Rhodes in a pleasanter tone. He was surprised by the unexpected show of discernment. "We've got to make our gains while his strength lasts," he went on. "He is the life of the attack; he holds up that right side on the defence like a rock, and his kicking is wonderful. I'm watching him with my heart in my mouth. When he stops, we stop!"

The coach was off down the line with the Westcott kick. West received the ball this time, and made some progress in running it back. Jack took four yards, and on a fake kick got three more. Then Jeff sent one of his spirals boring its way through the air down the field. McDowell tried a quarter-back run which did not work, and pushed an onslaught into Pingree's territory which would have gone to a first down had not the defensive half burst into the interference and thrown the runner back. Perkins's kick fell into West's hands. Here, to the deep disgust of the coach, though the play was close to the Westcott side of the field with the Westcott coaches crouching within a yard of it, Burns used the Crusty trick

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again. It gained eight yards, but brought upon the thoughtless quarter a sharp reproof from his captain. Jeff plunged through the centre, and the linesmen moved their wands.

As Thorne now gave his quarter specific orders to save the strong plays for use in the enemy's territory, Burns, on the next third down, fell back again on his punter. From this time on, till the referee's whistle announced the end of the half, the game offered nothing but a series of rushes in which the defence overpowered the attack, and an exchange of punts in which Perkins with the wind proved about equal to Richards without it.

The first thing Rhodes did on stepping into the room where his grimy, perspiring flock was resting was to inquire for Richards. He found the half-back stretched out on the floor. "How are you feeling?" he demanded, as he peered down into the boy's red face. "Used up?"

Jeff shook his head with a reassuring smile. "I'm a little tired," he said, "but I guess I'm good for the rest of it."

"Not hurt?"

"Not a bit."

Rhodes turned to Thorne. "You've the hard-

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est task before you now. It won't do to stand on the defensive. The only way to hold your own is to make another touch-down."

Thorne nodded.

"You'll probably find that new play blocked," continued the coach, addressing Burns, who had joined the captain.

"Of course he will!" blurted Thorne. "He used it over and over again, and once right up by their side-line."

"Never mind about that now! If it fails, don't keep on trying it. Use the cross-current play, 86, with an occasional end run for Jack, and Richards through the line anywhere out of Hardie's way — and 76. They ought to carry you right along. Take advantage of the wind and kick your way down the field, saving your best things for the last forty yards. Don't forget 22 if you get pushed back after a first down near the middle of the field."

Burns was following closely. He had a question to ask about 22, but the details do not concern us. Later, Rhodes went the rounds of the team, examining and encouraging and pointing out amendable errors. Bunker, who was to take the place

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of Skillen, received special instructions as to blocking Horr's end runs. Alike for instruction and for rest, the fifteen minutes seemed all too short.

The Westcott players, as they lined up across the middle of the field, betrayed no sign of depression or doubt. They, too, had received fresh instructions during the intermission; they had no mind to accept defeat merely because the score was against them. Burns took the ball on the kick-off at his fifteen-yard line and ran it back across two white marks before Hardie slammed him down. Jack's failure at a skin-tackle play on the left showed that the Westcott defence had improved. So Burns, who had at last learned that he must save the strength of his attack for use in the enemy's territory, gave the ball to Jeff to kick. Rice misjudged the floating punt, dropped the ball, picked it up again — and was nailed by Bunker. Undaunted, McDowell sent Perkins at the line for a short gain; then, after a feint at Thorne's side and a pass behind the line, Horr appeared far over to the left, speeding for the end.

Bunker had been drawn in; only the line back stood between Horr and a clear thirty yards. Jeff was driving with all his speed across the field,

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but Horr was faster. For a moment it looked as if the Westcott man had won round; but at the final moment Jeff threw himself forward and got a grip with the ends of his fingers on the fleeting form. Horr wrenched himself loose, but as he did so his foot went across the line and the play was stayed.

Then Perkins kicked, and Jeff kicked again. The play drew close to the centre of the field, where Burns foolishly tried to make three yards through centre on a third down and Westcott's got the ball by a measurement of inches. Both sides were playing a hard defensive game; neither seemed to have the power to advance. On the third down Perkins fell back for a kick. Hardie, who was standing well behind the line, sped behind the full-back, took the ball from his hands, and, dodging Ray, made a long forward pass to Dunn, who carried it to the Newbury thirty-five-yard line before he was downed. A mass play at centre brought the ball five yards nearer the Newbury goal.

"I'm afraid they've got us!" sighed Perrin, as he scowled out over the field. "We don't seem to be doing anything this half!"

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So thought McDowell, as he tried to repeat the play. This time Firman broke into it as it started, and Jeff tumbled the runner after a yard of gain. The on-side kick by which the Westcott quarter hoped to outwit the stubborn foe was gathered in by West.

Five minutes later, after a series of kicks, the play was again at the middle of the field, with the ball in Newbury's hands. Thorne stepped back to the quarter and whispered a word in his ear. Burns nodded and gave a signal. The play that followed — a tackle-run to the right — was apparently a failure, for it resulted in a loss of three yards. The line-up after it was made so promptly, and the surprise of the Westcottites at seeing the ball snapped without a signal was so great, that they had no opportunity to notice a peculiarity of the Newbury formation. Ray and Graham, instead of following the ball after the previous play, had crept over to the side-line where they were standing motionless, one a few yards behind the other. As the ball moved, the pair went down the field. Jeff received the centre's pass as for a kick, ran to the left, and made a long throw to Jack Graham, who reached the twenty-five-yard line

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AT THE FINAL MOMENT JEFF THREW HIMSELF FORWARD. — *Page 155.*

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before the Westcott quarter ran him out of bounds.

A roar of delight from the Newbury spectators greeted the success of the stratagem. Their joy was considerably dampened as the next move yielded but a single yard. The Crusty play had failed! Burns gave the signal for the cross-current, and Jack worked his way forward six yards. Rhodes's mass play now carried the ball to a first down within the fifteen-yard line. Tried a second time, it yielded but four yards; the cross-current proved good for only a niggardly six feet. In his straits Burns had no resource but the power of his right half-back. He put the ball into Jeff's hands and sent him against the line behind Thorne to gain four yards in the face of the resistance of half the rival team. How the Newbury back could force his way through the press of opponents is hard to explain, but this much is sure: when the referee unravelled the knot of bodies that hid the plunger from sight, the ball was found safely within the five-yard line. After that, successful resistance was impossible. Jack, with West and Jeff behind him, made two yards at the left of centre, and Jeff alone burst outside of Pingree across the goal-line.

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Panting exclamations of joy and praise, Burns took the ball from the hands of the prostrate player and walked out with it for the try at goal. Jeff did not rise. He lay, inert and weak, with eyes half open, breathing heavily. Thorne knelt at his side, beckoning wildly for Perrin.

"Are you hurt?" asked the captain in frightened tones.

Jeff smiled faintly. "No, I'm just done up!" he gasped. "I'll be all right in a minute."

Perrin was busy with the sponge. Over the manager's anxious face Jeff caught a glimpse of Rhodes, and with an effort raised himself to sitting position. "I'm knocked out," he explained. "I guess you'll have to put Hiatt in."

"You've done enough," declared the coach, emphatically.

"I hate to be such a quitter."

"Quitter!" snorted Rhodes. "You've spent the strength of two men for the team. If they can't keep what you've won, they don't deserve a victory."

So Richards was led away to the quarters, and Newbury finished the game without him — playing frantically on the defensive the whole time.

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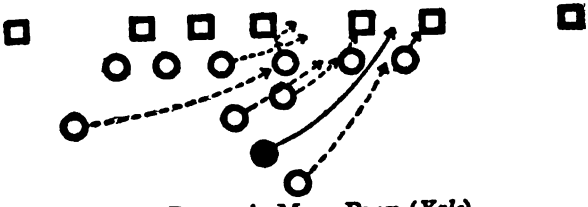
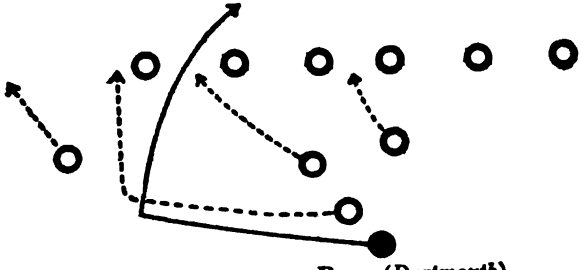
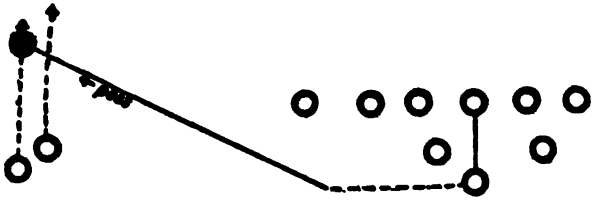


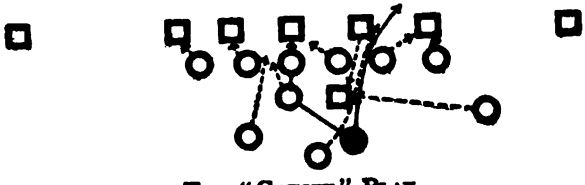
RHODES'S MASS PLAY (*Yale*)



THE CROSS-CURRENT PLAY (*Dartmouth*)



NEWBURY FORWARD PASS



THE "CRUSTY" PLAY

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CHAPTER XIV

A FALSE ALARM

With hot, red faces dashed with streaks of mud, the Newbury players crawled into their quarters, a rear-guard of claqueurs pressing on their heels. A single glance at the first comer removed Jeff's doubts.

"Thirteen to three!" announced Stevens. "They pulled off a couple of good forward passes at the end, but they couldn't quite get to the line."

"Keep quiet there!" commanded Perrin. "How do you expect me to put your shoes on when you're twisting all over the bench! Can't you push with this leg?"

"I'm pushing as hard as I can," returned Jeff with a weak smile. "There isn't much push left in me. I don't see why it is that I get knocked out so much sooner than the other fellows!"

Perrin could have explained the mystery, but he did not try to do so, for Thorne had burst in upon them, his dark eyes aflame with exultation.

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"We've done it, old boy!" he cried, as he gripped Jeff's hand. "We have met the enemy, and they are ours — not by a fluke, either. Their ends didn't save them, nor their drop-kicks. We had the defence and the backs, and the plays that would work — "

"And the line," interrupted Jeff.

"No, it was you and Jack that did it."

"Count me out," interposed Graham. "Jeff made two yards to my one."

"I won't count any one out. We're all in."

"You're right there!" groaned Hewin, as he collapsed on a bench. "I never was so confoundedly all in as I am at this very moment."

"How do you feel, Jeff?" asked Rhodes, with a hint of anxiety in his voice.

"I'm coming out all right," responded the happy boy. "All I want is rest. It seems as if I weighed three hundred pounds."

"You won't get any rest in this crazy gang. Better dress as soon as you can and get out."

The room filled with a jubilant crowd, exclaiming, singing, shouting questions and answers, recalling anecdotes of the game.

"Here's an advance reading from to-morrow's

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papers!" proclaimed Perrin from the top of a bench. "Newbury springs a surprise on Westcott's. Richards the hero of the day! He worries the Back Bay boys by his long punts, and annexes great slabs of territory by whirlwind rushes!"

Jeff roused himself. "If they say that, they'll be absolutely wrong. When I made the big gains, my feet weren't on the ground at all. Thorne and Ray were holding me up, and Jack and Weeksie carrying me along."

"That 5-5 play worked over and over again," declared Graham.

"Bumpus got on to it at the end," said Burns.

"By the way, where did you get that play?" Rhodes asked. "You were going to tell me if it turned out well." He planted himself before the bench, while others who caught the question formed a circle behind him.

"My brother invented it," said Jeff, coolly.

"Your brother! What does he know about football?"

"Nothing!" answered Jeff, grinning ecstatically. "That's where the joke comes in! He got it into his head that he could make a good play,

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and he kept at it until he hit upon this one. I tried to discourage him, but it wasn't any use."

"That's what he came out on the field so much for, was it?" Perrin asked.

Jeff nodded.

"Well, I'm knocked!" exclaimed Thorne, who had listened with open mouth to the revelation. "Who'd have dreamed that Old Crusty — " Some one gave his arm a pinch. He stopped, turned half around, and beheld Mr. Richards approaching the group.

"I was anxious to see how Jeff was getting on," explained the teacher. "I hope you won't mind my intruding."

"Not at all!" "Jeff's all right!" Rhodes and Perrin spoke simultaneously. Perrin yielded the floor to the coach, who went on: —

"I've just learned that we are indebted to you for our crack play."

Mr. Richards blushed. "It seemed to work pretty well."

"It was the best thing we had," declared Thorne. "They couldn't stop it for a long time, and it gave us lots of first downs. You'll soon be qualifying as a football expert."

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Mr. Richards relapsed suddenly into his schoolmaster's tone. "I am not at all certain that I approve the game," he announced with solemnity. "It's a serious tax on the strength of the player, if not absolutely injurious, and it has a marked tendency toward arousing a spirit of vindictiveness and brutality. There was very little of this in evidence to-day, but I can imagine a game degenerating into a mere fight."

"A little fighting is good for us, Mr. Richards," said Perrin. "It keeps us from becoming mollycoddles."

"Some of the greatest names in history have been borne by men whom you would call mollycoddles," answered the teacher.

"I'm ready now," cried Jeff, who had been cramming his clothes into his bag with desperate haste. "Let's go."

"I'll carry your bag out to the car," offered Rhodes.

"Oh, no, I'll do that," said the teacher. "Well, boys, I am glad you were victorious."

"Thank you, sir," called half a dozen at once. "So are we."

The pair went forth, watched in silence by the whole roomful.

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"What does he want to spoil everything by giving us that lecture for?" sputtered Thorne, when the coast was clear. "This isn't the place for it. I was beginning to think I'd misjudged him."

"Because he's Crusty," answered Perrin, sagely. "You don't expect Jeff to make him over in a week, do you? I'll give you a pointer: if you want to help Jeff, try to think well of his brother."

"I'm ready to forgive him 'most anything after to-day," said Captain Thorne.

The flattering issue of the Westcott game threw sunshine over the school for a week. A feeling of vast self-respect animated the boys. Those who fancied themselves superior fraternized with inferiors in gloating over the achievement of the team of which all had an equal right to be proud. The chronic grumblers ceased to air their grievances. For a time, Crusty was unwittingly on the verge of popularity. He was reputed to have smiled twice in one recitation in a very human fashion and without being forced to it by one of his own ghastly jokes. His sarcasm was — or seemed to be — less biting. He actually overlooked the sin of a boy who came with an unpre-

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pared lesson, and neglected to hand in at the beginning of the recitation the written excuse which the rules required. To be sure, the boy had a good excuse,— and what was better, a good record; but Crusty being a stickler for the letter of the law, the point was counted in his favor. Had not Crusty invented a winning football play, and brought a winning half-back to school? These two facts towered high on the days following the Westcott game, and almost hid the past from sight.

Just as the school was sliding back into its old grooves and the recent victory was beginning to assume the form of agreeable reminiscence, a horrid rumor destroyed the general complacency. Newbury was to be buncoed out of the fruits of her conquest. She had beaten Westcott's, but not Trowbridge; the league would decide that there was no championship. Who was authority for the rumor, no one knew except Saunders, who started it on its swift course; and Saunders, who made his disclosures to everybody in confidence, declined to tell how he had received the news. At the same time came the official call for a meeting of the managing committee of the league.

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"Sandy got it from John Smith, you can be sure of that," said Thorne. "He wants to make us reëlect him president."

"I can't see what this has to do with his reëlection," remarked Perrin.

"It's mixed up with it some way. Smithy thinks if he poses as our friend against the others, we'll try to keep him in to protect us. Sandy says our best chance of getting our rights is to have Smith's influence in the meeting. I don't vote for him again, whatever happens."

"No fair-minded person can doubt that our team deserves the championship," argued Perrin. "One victory and one tie game gives us one and a half points. Westcott's gets one point and Trowbridge half a point."

"The by-laws say, 'The team which wins a majority of games shall hold the championship for the year,' " put in Graham. "What do you make of that?"

"Well, we've won a majority. One and a half is a majority," said Ray.

"That's a plurality, not a majority," corrected Perrin.

"If that's the case, we're done for!" exclaimed

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Ray. "They'd both rather have no championship than see us get it."

Ray undoubtedly expressed the feeling of the school. A bitter suspicion prevailed that Trowbridge and Westcott's would unite to cheat Newbury of her fairly won laurels. Mr. Richards remarked, when Jeff told him of the anxiety of the boys, that the story seemed quite probable. "The schools in this country do not pursue athletics for sport, but merely to win," he said. "If you are defeated on the field, you try to gain your ends by making cabals in your meetings. That's just what we have to expect from our present system of athletics. From an educational standpoint, it is vicious. Honor does not count in the scale with success."

"But you don't know that it will be so," protested Jeff. "The rumor may be a fake."

"The principle holds, none the less," answered the teacher. "It doesn't depend on this one case."

Thorne went to the meeting in no happy frame of mind. He had had an unpleasant experience on a similar occasion the year before when John Smith and Newbold had tried to force through a

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protest against Westcott's, and he had incurred savage hostility by voting against them. This time he would be standing with his mates, but trouble seemed inevitable. Mr. Snyder and Rodman were present from Trowbridge, Mr. Adams and Hardie from Westcott's; Perrin shared with Thorne the responsibility of representing Newbury. Thorne glanced across at Hardie, a new member of the committee, and wished his predecessor were in his place. "Pete Talbot wouldn't stand for any crooked business," he thought disconsolately; "I'm afraid of Hardie."

Mr. Smith, after calling the meeting to order, announced the first business to be the election of a presiding officer.

"I nominate Mr. Snyder," offered Hardie.

"It seems to me that the school which holds the cup is entitled to the presidency," said Mr. Snyder. "That would be a sensible precedent to establish. I suggest that Mr. Adams be made president for next year, and that Westcott's be asked to select a new member of the committee to take his place."

Rodman and Perrin united in offering to second the motion, though no motion had been made.

"If there is no objection," continued Mr. Sny-

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der, "I will move that Rodman be directed to cast a ballot for Mr. Adams as president."

The motion was put and carried by acclamation, though neither of the representatives from Westcott's voted. President John rose to surrender the office in which he had gloried for more than a twelvemonth. There remained for him no alternative but to retire with the best possible grace.

"Please keep the chair, Mr. Smith!" interposed Mr. Adams. "It isn't worth while to make a change now. I'll remain a simple delegate to-day."

"If you wish it," murmured Mr. Smith, humbly, as he settled back into his seat. He felt that he had escaped from an awkward predicament. To be forced to withdraw in the midst of the session would have seemed far too much like being kicked out. His tones were exceedingly modest as he inquired the further pleasure of the meeting.

"We have to arrange the schedules for the year," suggested Mr. Adams.

"Wouldn't it be better to settle first the matter of the football championship?" asked Mr. Snyder. "There seems to be some uncertainty as to the application of the rules in our present case."

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Thorne straightened up. It was coming now! The keeping of President John was evidently a mere compliment to Newbury, a preliminary move to gain credit for fairness!

"I don't believe, however," went on the Trowbridge master, "that there can be any question as to what we had in mind when we formulated the rules. The team that had proved itself the best was to be considered the winner of the series. Newbury, by winning one game and tying in another, has proved itself superior to Westcott's, which has gained but one victory, and to Trowbridge, which has gained none. I should say that Newbury is clearly entitled to the championship."

"We certainly have no right to object," said Hardie with a smile. "Newbury beat us squarely enough."

Thorne listened in delighted astonishment. There was not a word of discussion, nor the slightest hint of a desire to take advantage of the unfortunate wording of the by-laws. On Mr. Snyder's motion, Newbury was formally recognized as winner of the football series. The arrangement of schedules and the selection of officials for the games was referred to a committee consisting of

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Mr. Adams, Mr. Snyder, and Perrin. Within ten minutes after the call to order, the meeting had finished its business and adjourned, Mr. Smith taken his departure, and the new committee gone into executive session.

While they waited for their colleagues, Rodman, Thorne, and Hardie chatted in the corner of the room like friends of long standing. Football was the first topic. After each had applied his own peculiar adjectives to the remarkable playing of the Newbury back-field, Hardie told of Pete Talbot's success in the fall races in Cambridge, where he had rowed six on the Mt. Auburn Street crew. Later, they discussed the new course for schoolboy crews on the Charles, jumping thence to college rooms, — a topic which possessed more interest for Thorne and Hardie than for Rodman, who had still two years of school life before him and was not yet certain which college he was to enter.

When the deliberations of the committee came to an end, the Newbury boys said good-by to their friends and marched off together. Neither commented on the meeting until they had covered nearly a block. Then Thorne burst out: —

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"What idiots we were to be taken in by that yarn of Sandy's! No one dreamed of jockeying us."

"They're gentlemen, not backers of a prize fight," returned Perrin, thoughtfully. "Our suspicions weren't very creditable to us, were they?"

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CHAPTER XV

THE AMENDE HONORABLE

THE school received with joy the news of the favorable decision of the League, exulted for a day, and fell back into the well-ordered routine of scholastic existence. The events of the football season, though occasionally referred to, soon ceased to form a topic of conversation. The essential fact of the victory, however, was not forgotten. It still remained to cheer present drudgery and stimulate hopes for the future; it served for months as a storage battery to strengthen the current of school spirit—that combination of pride in one's school and eagerness to help it from which the best student influences draw their power.

The persons by whose efforts the victory had been brought about, profited more directly by the achievement. Their position in the school world was definitely fixed. The name "Young Crusty" possessed a different connotation at the end of November from what it had borne when the month

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began. It was mentioned with respect; its owner was treated with a friendliness as warm and generous as the earlier indifference had been frigidly hostile. When fellows indulged in invective against Mr. Richards, they glanced about first to make sure that Jeff was out of earshot; when Crusty was undeservedly harsh in recitations, they tried to hide their indignation from Jeff. The chief fact to be considered in the case of Jefferson Richards was no longer that he was the brother of an unpopular teacher, but that he was the halfback who had won the Westcott game.

While Jeff emerged from the football season in a blaze of glory, assured for the future of kindly treatment by the school, the prejudice against his brother was too deeply rooted to be overthrown by a single happy guess at a football play, or a brief and casual interest in the school sports. This Jeff acknowledged with sadness as the daily recitations took their course, and Crusty slipped back into his old inflexible, unsympathetic, pedantic ways. The boys learned much in Mr. Richards's recitations, but they worked grudgingly and without gratitude. The food was wholesome, but bitter to the taste; they gave little heed to its

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substantial quality and made much of its unpleasant flavor. "He's all right at bottom," sighed Jeff, as he came out from a particularly unpleasant session in which Crusty's sarcasm had flowed most freely, "but he goes at us as if we were a prison squad and he a keeper. He really seems to be glad when he finds some one to jump on. I wish I could get a little gentleness into him and some feeling for the boys. He doesn't think they have any rights at all!"

The November averages showed Jefferson Richards to be third in his class. Jeff was satisfied, but not so his brother. "You ought to have been first," he said with an air of disapproval. "There isn't a boy in the class who possesses your ability."

"You expect too much of me," answered Jeff. "I'm no genius. The geometry examination pulled me down. I spent so much time on the original that I couldn't finish the paper. When I get used to things, I may do better."

"It was football that pulled you down," remarked Mr. Richards.

"But last month I was only fifth."

"I wish you had more of the spirit of Leo Ross," said the teacher, avoiding the inference suggested

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by Jeff's statement. "He has surmounted obstacles which your football friends would not have dreamed of attempting. He is never diverted from his purpose, and never weakens."

"I should think better of him if he took a bath occasionally," said Jeff.

"That is like the unfair judgment of a schoolboy," answered the elder brother, warmly. "Let me tell you about Leo Ross. His real name is Roskowski. He came to this country from Odessa five years ago, as poor as it is possible for an immigrant to be, possessing no knowledge of English except what he had gained by reading and rereading one book, "The Vicar of Wakefield." His vocabulary when I first knew him was entirely Goldsmith's, with a smattering of everyday terms picked up in the street. He got employment as a telegraph messenger, and proved so capable and trustworthy that when he wanted to come to school the district manager gave him the opportunity to work afternoons and evenings. He has kept this up every day since he first entered school. He learns his lessons with a book on his knees in the intervals of waiting for orders, or after he has quit work at night; he has had no vacations and no

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rests. When he first came to us he wore high rubber boots and a jacket pinned across under his chin so as to conceal the fact that he had no shirt; but he was soon able to dress like other boys. As far as my observation goes, he is always neat. Dr. Morgan tells me that the telegraph manager declares that the boy must go through the scientific school, and offers to lend him whatever money is needed. Think of the difference between Perrin's inheritance and surroundings and the disadvantages which Ross has to struggle against, and tell me which of the two deserves the greater credit."

"Why, Ross, of course," answered Jeff, meekly. "He doesn't always go to work after school, though; I've heard him banging the piano in the hall between two and three."

"That is his only diversion. Dr. Morgan discovered that he loved music, and gave him permission to use the school piano. He occasionally finds some other boy to relieve him at the office for an hour. He borrows all his music from the Public Library."

For an interval the two were silent. Jeff was wondering why he did not feel the same enthu-

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siasm as his brother for the unquestionable virtues of Leo Ross. The young Russian's courage, ambition, persistence, power of achievement, were admirable beyond a doubt; but somehow Jeff felt no burning desire to be like him. It may be true, as the poet wrote, that "lives of great men all remind us we can make our lives sublime," but the question will arise, as we study these lives, whether the sublimity is always worth the cost.

"Imagine Leo Ross, who has been for years fighting the real battles of life, wasting precious energy on the empty contests of football," went on Mr. Richards. "He is above all such trivialities. They mean no more to him than they would to Dr. Morgan or the district manager."

"Dr. Morgan isn't above football," said Jeff, quickly. "He was at the Harvard-Yale game. Jack Graham saw him there. The manager may have been there, too, for all we know."

But Mr. Richards was not to be led away from his preachment. "Football has merits as well as faults, I am ready to grant; but after all, it is only a diversion, beneficial or otherwise according to circumstances, to which the modern schoolboy assigns an importance ridiculously out of propor-

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tion to its real value. Music is Leo's diversion; he is passionately fond of it, but he keeps it entirely subordinate to his life purpose. He means to be an engineer. He will be a great engineer. Nothing will stop him."

"And we shall all be working for him," said Jeff. "I'd rather work for Perrin or Jack Graham."

As Mr. Richards was leaving for school the next morning, the postman put into his hands an important package. A week before he had sent the finished portion of his "First Lessons in Latin" to a schoolmaster acquaintance for criticism. Though he had asked for a "frank opinion," what he really hoped for was praise. The package contained the returned manuscript. Mr. Richards turned back into his study, tore open the wrappings with impatient fingers, and read the enclosed letter. The opinion was frank in the extreme, but unfavorable; in the critic's judgment there was not enough originality in the treatment of the subject to give promise of successful competition with similar books in a field already overcrowded. Like many a conscientious pedagogue, Mr. Richards considered his own methods unique and

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superior, overlooking the probability that they differed little from those of a hundred other successful teachers. The criticism dealt a hard blow to his pride and hope. He carried to school a heart heavy with disappointment and a temper acutely sensitive to annoyance.

As the second class came in for their Latin recitation at the third period, some inconsiderate disturber of the peace gave Adolf Herz a push that sent him sprawling into the room. The master's face flamed. He upbraided the class savagely for their "clownish behavior," assured them that they were the most ill-mannered set of boys in school, and gave Herz a mark on the spot, promising to continue to give him marks for the slightest act of disorder until he either had learned to behave like a gentleman or was forced out of school. After this encouraging introduction he called on the unlucky Adolf to begin the translation. Adolf stumbled through two lines and came to a halt before a verb, whose meaning he could not in his confusion recall, though he had looked it up four times before the recitation.

"Herz, how long did you study this lesson?"

"Two hours, sir."

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The class snickered. Mr. Richards glowered at the boy, who stood before him grinning from sheer nervousness and fright.

"Excellent!" he ejaculated. "Two hours of study and two lines to show as the result. You are an ornament to the school, Herz. Take your book to that unoccupied seat in the rear of the room and work at this lesson. You will have an hour now and another after school. In that time perhaps you will be able to master another two lines. — Stevens, begin once more!"

The class came down for recess violent in their expressions of indignation. "Why didn't you tell him you pushed me?" Adolf complained to Stevens. "It wasn't my fault at all."

"It wouldn't have helped any," said Stevens. "He'd have soaked me without letting you off."

This much Jeff caught as he passed a fiercely sputtering group. He did not linger to hear more, and his classmates were considerate enough to avoid the subject in his presence. He shared their feeling of resentment at his brother's exhibition of unfairness and ill-temper, with an added sense of personal shame. Why did Charles show

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himself at his very worst before the boys? What could he gain by making himself detested?

That afternoon Mr. Richards proposed a long walk. His day had been full of annoyances; he felt the need of some physical exertion to help him throw off the burden of depression which had been gathering since the postman's visit. The roads were heavy with mud, the fields soggy; the pair took to the city sidewalks, and tramped block after block in a silence broken only by an occasional comment on some object which they passed. Each pondered gloomily his own troubles, while the miles lengthened beneath their feet.

"Have you heard from your book yet?" asked Jeff, as they started on the homeward tack.

"Yes, it came back this morning."

"What did Mr. Eldridge say of it?"

"Nothing very flattering. He thinks it lacks novelty of treatment."

"Oh, that was the matter to-day, was it?" exclaimed Jeff.

"What do you mean?" demanded his brother, sharply.

"Why, the way you sailed into poor Dutchy when some one pushed him into the room. He

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couldn't help what he did any more than I could."

"Probably not," answered Mr. Richards, coldly. "Why didn't the boy who pushed him come forward and take the punishment?"

"I can tell you why," said Jeff, seizing his opportunity boldly, "for I heard him talk about it afterwards. He said you would simply have stung him and Dutchy too."

"Is it likely that I should have done that?"

"I don't know. The boys think so, anyway."

"A boy who neglects his work and lies about it can't expect gentle treatment," declared the teacher, with a want of logic hardly creditable to his intellectual superiority.

"He didn't lie. He worked hard on that lesson. I know it, because he asked me a lot of questions about it before school which showed that he had been over it all. He was so rattled at what had happened that he forgot everything he'd learned. It's awfully discouraging to a thickhead like Herz to work hard over a lesson and then get thrown down without a show. He thinks after a while that it isn't any use to study."

The walk did not relieve Mr. Richards's depres-

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sion; it gave additional food for bitter reflection. Jeff, too, found new reason for discouragement. He was beginning to doubt whether Charles was capable of seeing his faults and changing for the better.

The first two hours of the evening were unusually quiet. Jeff, with dogged persistence, pursued a baffling problem in geometry along various blind trails; the elder brother's thoughts, as he brooded over his discredited manuscript, kept recurring to Jeff's comment on his treatment of Herz. He had always flattered himself with the conviction that in his dealings with the boys he was stern, but just. To-day he had allowed a personal disappointment to make him ugly and unjust. He could not help acknowledging that if the other boy had claimed the blame for the act of disorder, he should in all probability have done just what the class expected him to do, punished the agent without acquitting the instrument. To add to the handicap under which a blockhead like Herz habitually labored was both unfair and unkind.

"Jeff, I suppose I'm very unpopular," he said at length.

The boy lifted his eyes for an instant from his

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papers and dropped them again. "I'm afraid you are," he answered.

"I've never run after popularity as some men do," went on the teacher, "but I have always endeavored to do my work thoroughly and have my influence and example right."

"The trouble is that when the boys dislike a man he has no influence at all."

"Do you think it is always the fault of a teacher when the boys dislike him?" asked Mr. Richards. "Don't they dislike a strict man because he is strict, and like an easy man because he is easy?"

Jeff shook his head. "Boys see a lot more than you think."

Jeff's words plainly implied that there was something for the boys to see, but his brother made no comment on the answer. He was considering Jeff's earlier assertion that a man who is disliked has no influence. It was a new idea to Mr. Richards, who had always regarded his unpopularity as the price paid for superior efficiency.

Five minutes later he asked abruptly, "If I am wrong in my treatment of the boys, how can I put myself right?"

"I don't know exactly," Jeff evaded.

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"You must have some idea."

"Well, try to be fair and to think of things more from their point of view. They don't want to be petted or babied, and they don't expect to be let off when they do wrong, but it doesn't do any good to call the class names, or to jump on the wrong boy. They don't like sarcasm at all; it seems like hitting a person who can't hit back. I should say that if you treated them just as you would like to be treated if you were in their place and had their ideas, you wouldn't get far out of the way."

"But their ideas are not always right," said the teacher.

The next day Mr. Richards astounded his second class by the announcement that after carefully considering the circumstances he feared that he had been unjust to Herz at the last recitation. He would cancel the mark against him if the boy who pushed him into the room would declare himself. Stevens rose immediately.

"I did it, sir. Herz wasn't to blame at all."

"Come to me after school," said Mr. Richards, quietly. "Now let us see whether Herz cannot give us a better recitation to-day."

Adolf, thus kindly challenged, put his better

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foot forward, and helped out by an occasional suggestion, achieved a very decent performance. Mr. Richards glanced at Jeff while Adolf was pounding along his rough course, and received in return an appreciative smile that encouraged him in his new method in Latin.

"That was square of Crusty, wasn't it, Dutchy?" asked Weeks, after the recitation.

Herz agreed without qualification.

"And he wasn't sarcastic once," said Stevens. "I wonder what's got into him!"

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CHAPTER XVI

TO PLAY OR NOT TO PLAY

In the middle of December the boys who were interested in hockey held a meeting, elected a captain, and petitioned the faculty for leave to have a school team. When the question was first raised, Mr. Richards was disposed to frown upon the scheme; he expressed to one of his colleagues a very decided opinion that the school had teams enough. It occurred to him, however, before the faculty meeting that it would do no harm to talk the matter over with his brother and learn what arguments the boys had to advance, before he gave his vote. Hockey could demoralize only a small number at the worst, and it might be well to discover who wanted it, why they wanted it, and what good purpose it was supposed to serve. This attitude was a new one for Mr. Richards to assume; he flattered himself that he was guided solely by his natural sense of fairness. In fact, close association with a normal boy was opening

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his eyes to much to which he had formerly been blind. He was drifting away from his old habit of regarding his pupils as raw recruits to be endured, drilled, and judged for five hours each day. With an increasing knowledge of their ways of thought and ideals he was acquiring a new respect for them and a desire to work with them rather than against them.

"I suppose you are one of the would-be hockey team," he began, as Jeff burst in before dinner with skates over his arm, his face aglow with happiness and aggressive health. "I understand they have elected Graham captain without waiting for permission to form a team."

"No, I'm not. Jack wants me to play, but I think I'll keep out of it. I'd like to have a try at baseball when the time comes."

This suggestion as to baseball Jeff threw out with artful intent. He was delighted to find that his brother passed it by without objection.

"You approve of the hockey team, then?"

"Why, yes. I don't see any harm in it."

"It won't interfere at all with the studies of the boys who are on it?"

Jeff considered. "Yes, it may to a certain ex-

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tent; but they'll play anyhow, on scrub teams, and if you have a school seven, you can manage them better. I'd like to see a school team on Jack's account; he needs it."

"I should say that he is the very person who doesn't need it. Football in the fall, baseball in the spring, with a part in the school play and all sorts of amusements thrown in between, constitute a fairly full programme for one boy. It would seem that he might spend a little of his surplus time on his books."

"Isn't he pretty good in his studies?"

"He is not what he might be."

"The more Jack Graham has to do, the better it will be for him," said Jeff. "He's a queer combination — in some ways about the best fellow in school, lively and kind-hearted, and always ready to help you, and yet with a crazy streak in him and obstinate as a mule. If he'd lived at the right time, he'd have made a great Indian fighter, or a filibuster or a Forty-niner. He's been a friend to me ever since I came to school. When the fellows were down on me, back in the fall, Jack was always pleasant to me. I shouldn't want to see anything happen to Jack Graham. That's why

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I hope there'll be a hockey team. It may keep him out of trouble."

"Jeff, does Jack Graham drink?" asked Mr. Richards, abruptly. "I know he smokes, but does he drink?"

The boy gave a start. "That's a question I have no right to answer," he said. "He has never asked me either to smoke or drink. He hasn't been brought up as I was; I suppose his family use wine at home. All I have to say about him is that he is a mighty good fellow at heart — and I think it would be a benefit to him to be captain of a school hockey team."

The teacher mused for a time in silence. "Well, I'll vote for the hockey," he said at length, "provisionally, of course, until we see how it works. I should like to save Graham, but I doubt if hockey or any other sport will do more than restrain him for a time. The school has very little influence with him. His parents and the boy himself must bear the chief responsibility for the success or failure of his life."

Other teachers besides Mr. Richards had been opposed to the introduction of a new sport into the school curriculum. Dr. Morgan, who was

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influenced by much the same considerations as those advanced by Jeff, and felt that the general gain was likely to outweigh the loss, was in doubt how to conduct the discussion so as to avoid the appearance of supporting a cause popular with the boys because it was popular. He liked to govern the school through his faculty, and he usually was able to accomplish his ends without recourse to the absolute authority with which he was vested. His task at the faculty meeting proved surprisingly easy. No sooner was the petition of the hockey enthusiasts submitted than Mr. Richards declared himself in favor of giving the team a trial. At this unexpected complaisance on the part of the great objector, the opposition melted away into a discussion of limits to be set to the number of games, and the standard of scholarship to be required of the participants. Dr. Morgan listened in amused silence while the new advocate of the extension of athletics swung the doubters into line.

The call for candidates for the hockey team, which was posted immediately, brought a full score of stick-wielders to Putnam's Pond. Some were veterans of other sports, but new men formed

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a good half of the total. Ray, who had imbibed from some theorist the notion that hockey tended to stiffen the muscles, refused squarely to have any part in the "foolish shinny," and besides raised such an outcry that Pierce, his pitcher, was forced to strike his name off Graham's list. The captain consoled the disappointed pitcher with the post of manager. Jeff went out with the rest. He loved skating, and he loved a scrimmage. As hockey offered the best opportunity for a combination of the two kinds of fun, he took it up for amusement, but he did not offer himself as a candidate for the team. In fact, as he confided to Jack at the outset, he wasn't at all sure how much athletics his brother would stand, and as it was policy to sacrifice something, he preferred to sacrifice hockey and thereby purchase a dispensation for baseball.

So Jack put Jeff at guard on the second, where he stood day after day, getting a brief chance from time to time to fling himself into the fray, but for the most part stamping his cold feet in idleness while he waited for something to happen. Occasionally his patience gave out, and, tired of lifting the puck away from the danger zone and returning to passive sentinel duty before the net,

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he would scrape it out of reach of his nearest adversary and nurse it down the course into the thick of the fight. This irregular conduct on the part of the goal-keeper of the second sometimes resulted in a drive through the gateway which he had deserted, and always brought down on him the maledictions of the captain — but what would you have? When one plays hockey for fun, one can't be expected to content one's self with idle shivering while others have the fun!

Soon Jack gathered the best players into his first team and began to develop a scheme of team play. Jeff begged off from duty at goal, securing in exchange with Stevens the post of cover-point. From this time he had no reason to complain that he was not given work enough to keep him warm. The forwards on the second couldn't hold the puck against the defence of the first; it was forever sliding back into Jeff's domain with the most aggressive of the school forwards crowding it on. Jeff's *vis-à-vis* was usually Graham, the best player on the pond, a fast skater, quick in starting, adept in dodging, keen to see or make an opening for a pass. Against these merits Jeff could oppose only an unshakable firmness of foot, a skill in body-

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checking, and a certain cleverness in keeping his solid figure between his opponent and the puck. He possessed, moreover, the knack of hitting straight. Between these two players developed a battle royal whenever Jeff was put into the game. Graham usually contrived in the end to gain a chance to shoot for goal before the puck was driven back, but as the practice went on it became increasingly difficult to carry it past the cover-point of the second, or to shake his persistent clinging.

The team played its first match with a neighboring high school, winning by a score of four to nothing. A week later they encountered Bainbridge Latin, and came off victors again, though by a smaller margin. While they were gloating over these proofs of prowess and looking forward with complacency to the rest of the five games allowed by the faculty, Manager Pierce received a challenge from the "Blue Toques" signed by Louis Tracy.

"Who are the Blue Toques, and who is Louis Tracy?" demanded Graham, as he handed the missive back to his manager. "We can't be wasting our games on every scrub team that wants to play us!"

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"I know Louis Tracy," said Thorne. "He rowed on the Westcott second crew last year."

"Perhaps it's a Westcott seven under a different name," suggested Pierce. "They weren't allowed to have a school team."

Graham's face lighted. "Do you think so?" he asked eagerly. "If that's the case, we want to take them on. How can we find out about it?"

"My brother may know," said Thorne. "He's thick with little Mike McKay of Westcott's — sees him every week at a manual-training class. These kids brag a lot to each other, and if the Blue Toques are Westcott's, Mike would be sure to talk about it."

Winnie Thorne was speedily snatched from the heart of a flock in the basement and put on the witness-stand. With him, as always, went Freddy Danvers. Their information was delivered in alternating gusts, like jets of steam shot out from the cylinders of a slow-starting locomotive, Winnie making a statement, Freddy appending to it an addition. The Blue Toques was really a team of Westcott's fellows — except one Chestnut Hill boy who was put on to make it appear that it was just a scrub team. They had been practising for

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some time — at the Country Club, where the ice was always good. They had a coach — Dick Talbot, Pete Talbot's brother. Dunn and Tracy were on the team — and Hardie, the crew captain. Both reporters united in the assertion that Mike called it a "hot team."

"And that's all you know, is it?" Russell Thorne asked, as the boys hesitated and looked at each other for suggestions.

"That's enough, anyhow," said Jack. "We'll take them on. Put down the Blue Toques for a week before the Trowbridge game; that will be a week from Saturday. If we're going to have a regular league series, we've got to wake up. I wish I could get Young Crusty into it! He thinks he can't play."

"Go to Old Crusty," suggested Thorne, with a smile. "Perhaps he'll furnish you a hockey play."

Graham did not go to Old Crusty — at least, not at once. He waited until after his next match, in which the larger score was on the wrong side of the account. Skillen, at point, becoming frightened by the rushes of a big fellow who played against him, gave him a scandalously large number of shots at goal. "I've got to have Jeff before

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the Blue Toques," decided the captain; and boldly accosted the redoubtable Crusty.

"Let him play?" exclaimed Mr. Richards, when he heard the petition. "I have not prevented his playing. I thought he was playing."

"I mean on the team," explained Jack.

"Oh, that's his own affair," answered the teacher. "He decided not to play. I did not influence his decision."

"But he thought you would object to his playing both baseball and hockey, and he preferred baseball. If you don't object to both — "

"I don't object to anything as long as he keeps up his work."

"Thank you," said Jack, politely. "That's all I want to know."

"Jack made me play with the first to-day," Jeff remarked over the study table that night. "He said you had agreed to it."

"I told him you might do as you liked," answered the brother. "It is hardly fair to put restrictions on a boy who stands second in his class."

"I'm trying for first this month," said Jeff, thoughtfully, "but I suppose I shall slip up some-

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where, whatever I do. I don't believe the hockey will make any difference. There are only two games left, and Jack seems to think the team needs me."

"Play then." The teacher paused, took off his glasses, wiped them carefully, and replaced them on his nose. "But don't talk to me about the game," he added as he turned to his book again. "I cannot afford to become interested in another branch of athletics. Football cost me a whole week last November."

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CHAPTER XVII

HOCKEY

JEFF was in his position at cover-point,[1] fifteen yards out from his goal, when at the referee's whistle Louis Tracy, captain of the Blue Toques, and Jack Graham scraped savagely away at the puck. Jack swept it to one side, only to give McDowell the chance to seize it in the curve of his stick and slam it against the wall. The Blue Toque took it again on the rebound, and, with rapid strokes, his companions hurrying into line behind, dashed down the rink, carrying the rubber disk before him with dexterous twists of his stick. Jeff met him squarely in front, slashed the puck free, took it himself, and skating straight through the defence of his first opponent, delivered the missile into Henry's hands a dozen yards from the Westcott goal. Henry shot, but Perkins at goal

[1] The Newbury Seven: Firman, goal; Weeks, point; Richards, cover-point; Graham, right centre; Wilcox, left centre; Henry, right wing; Silverton, left wing.

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swept the puck to the corner of the rink, where the point of the Blues captured it and drove it to mid-field.

Here, after a mêlée of whacks and twists and scrapes in which the inconstant puck danced crazily to and fro, refusing to stay long in the possession of either side, McDowell fished it out of the crowd and wheeled with it up the ice. At once was seen the value of the coaching which the Westcott team had enjoyed. The forwards, formed abreast into a line of four, came sweeping up the rink toward the Newbury goal. Jeff again threw himself across McDowell's path, but McDowell had passed to Hardie at the other end of the line. Hardie, with a quick turn, backed past Weeks, the Newbury point, and whirling about, let fly at the goal. Firman's leg pads snapped together; the puck struck them with a thud and was flipped to one side just as the Blue line wheeled before the net.

Jeff, pouncing on the puck close to the sideboards, skated with all his strength down the field, the Blue forwards pursuing hotly, his own forwards gathering to his help. Jack was still ahead of him as he approached the Westcott cover-point.

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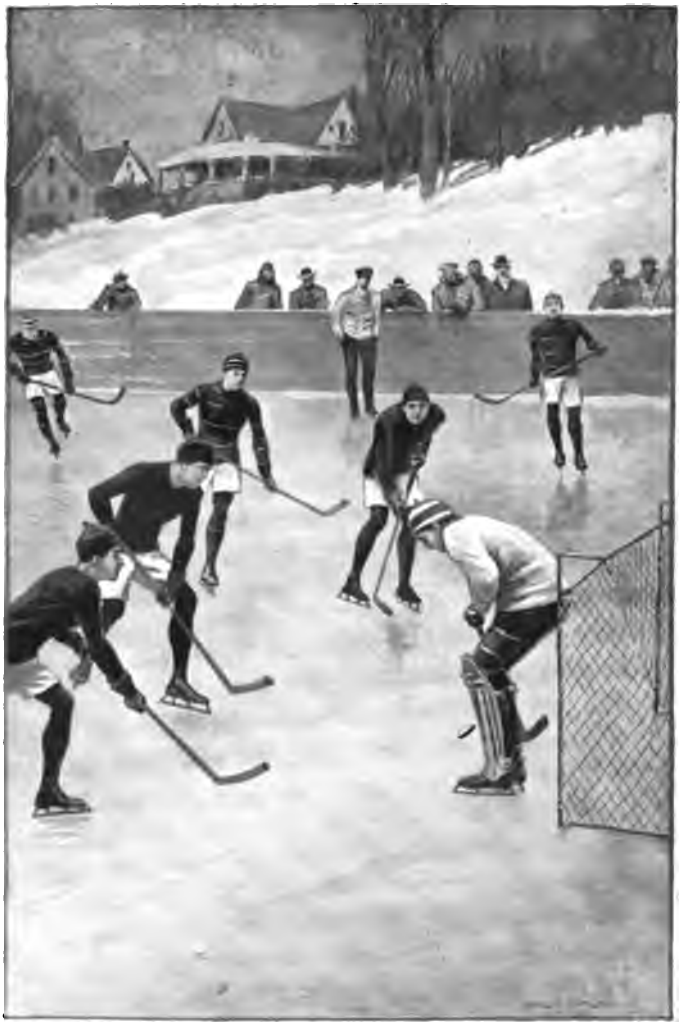

FIRMAN'S LEG-PADS SNAPPED TOGETHER. — *Page 202.*

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Unable, at the moment, to pass, he skated round his opponent with the puck still in the crook of his stick. Then, when the Westcott point threw himself forward, he slid the puck to Jack and turned back to his position. Jack wheeled to dodge Tracy, and in the same movement drove for the goal. Before Perkins realized that the puck was flying toward him, it had flashed past his hip into the net behind. Newbury had drawn the first blood.

The play went on with increasing vehemence. Solid bodies crashed together at the side-boards; players scooting for the puck lost their footing and slid yards along the ice, accompanied by hoots of applause from the onlookers; sticks were lost in the fray and regained; there were wild shots for goal from impossible points of attack, and turbulent scrimmages in front of the nets. It was plain that Westcott's had correct notions as to team play, but lacked the skill necessary to put them into effect. The line of forwards formed for the advance, but lagged so in the attack that the Newburyites, following back, broke up the formation. Newbury played furiously, but without unity. Graham among the forwards and

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Richards on the defence outclassed all rivals, but two men were not a team and could not score alone.

"A big swiping match!" exclaimed Ray in disgust from the edge of the pen. "It's just a gamble who wins."

"You can't expect team play without any coaching," returned Pierce. "There's luck in all games — any amount of it in baseball!"

"Baseball isn't all luck, as this game is." — "Look at that now!" Ray added a moment later.

The Newbury forwards had worked the puck down near their opponents' goal when the referee detected off-side play and blew his whistle. At the face, the Blue point got the puck beside the goal and sent it spinning up the ice. A Westcott skater driving himself toward the play happened in the path of the rubber disk. It struck his skate and rebounded straight into the Westcott goal.

"If that isn't luck, what do you call it!" demanded Ray.

"It's good, whatever you call it," responded Pierce, with a grin.

The first half ended without further scoring. The second developed play of extreme vigor, but little effective strength. Toward the end of the

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game the Blues made their first score. Jeff had become entangled with Hardie over by the side-boards. The assistant referee accused him of tripping and put him out of the game for two minutes. Freed from the interference of the troublesome cover-point, the whole Westcott team, with the exception of goal and point, gathered in front of the Newbury net, and by dint of smiting and scraping, forced Firman's defence.

Jeff returned to the game, smarting under the injustice done him and longing to make good the loss occasioned by his absence. A wild shot by Tracy gave him the puck behind his goal. While the Blue forwards were hanging back expecting a pass, Jeff edged by his nearest opponent, and pushing himself to his highest speed, went straight down the ice. Cover-point slashed at his stick, but Jeff swung the puck out of reach and swept on. Point made a lunge at him that neither stopped his progress nor loosened his grip on the precious disk. The goal-keeper advanced to check him, only to see him whirl like a flash and to hear the puck crack in the net behind. A minute later the timer's signal put an end to the contest.

"Three to one isn't so bad," remarked Gra-

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ham, complacently, after the game. "They thought we were going to be easy!"

"I'm afraid Trowbridge will trim us," said Henry. "They beat the Harvard Freshmen last Wednesday, and I believe they haven't lost a game this year."

"We've lost only one," returned Jack, boldly. "If we could only work up that line business and cover closer on the defence, we ought to have a good show. I'd like to smear 'em."

The team journeyed to Trowbridge alone. They were welcomed warmly by their rivals, given a substantial dinner in the big dining room, and most courteously shown the sights of the school which they inspected from chapel to cubicles with the gravity of a visiting committee appointed by the trustees.

"It seems too bad to lick 'em after all this, doesn't it!" said Graham, as his men were preparing to sally forth upon the ice. "We've got to do it just the same. You want to cut out that monkey business with the other fellow's stick, Henry. We're on our good behavior out here. Mind what I said about covering! And you forwards jump into line the instant we get the

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puck! Keep your eyes on it all the while and fight every second."

All this as exhortation was good; but successful team work in hockey requires something more than sound theory and intense personal effort. On the Trowbridge team at cover-point played our old friend Ricker, the half-back, a veritable rock against which the Newbury charges shattered like spent waves. He took a position across the ice from his point, Pelham, a dozen yards out from the goal, not immediately in front of him after the manner of the Newbury defence. Again and again the Newbury line, sweeping down upon the goal, found their advance checked by the pair and saw the puck scraped to the side-boards where Ricker, who skated like the wind, usually reached it before Henry or Silverton. This open defence demoralized the half-learned offence of the Newbury men. They followed back slowly to protect their own goal where Jeff and Weeks were struggling desperately against the quick-darting, clever-dodging Trowbridge forwards. Firman stopped four shots for goal during the first five minutes of play, while Jeff's vigorous body-checking nipped in the bud as many more.

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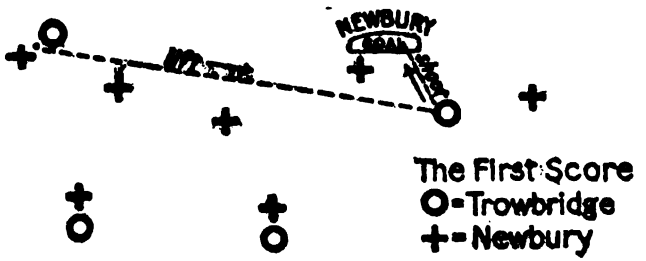
Under the furious onset Newbury grew wild. The men, in their zeal to obtain possession of the puck, were sometimes lax in covering for the protection of their goal. With a majority of their own men in the circle of play, there was a strong temptation to wait outside for a pass and trust to some one else to do the covering. At last, when the play had continued fifteen minutes without a score and the four Trowbridge forwards were again besetting the Newbury goal, Warren of Trowbridge got the puck away from Weeks at the extreme left side and lifted it neatly across the ice to his team-mate Jenks. Henry, instead of being between his man and the goal, was behind him. Before he could make good his negligence, the puck skimmed past Firman into the net.



In the intermission which interrupted the play soon after the first goal, Jack did his best to revive

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the courage of his team. "We can beat them yet!" he asserted stoutly. "They'll weaken in the second half."

"They skate too fast for me," confessed Henry. "When Ricker gets going, I can't seem to catch him."

"You'd do better if you'd use your head and watch the puck closer and not let your man get the jump on you," returned the captain, quickly.

"They come down so fast it's hardly possible to block them off," lamented Jeff. "They just slip by you."

"Keep with 'em!" commanded Jack. "They can't shoot if you're hanging in front of them all the time. You forwards must take a brace. They may skate faster than we do, but we've got the power, and we must use it. Get the puck down by their goal and some one will plug it through!"

The Newbury men tried hard to meet their captain's expectations. They threw themselves into the fray with an energy that often did good substitute service for speed and skill. Once the line of four carried the puck triumphantly from the back-field to the very gateway of the goal, but Silverton, who made the shot from one side, failed to

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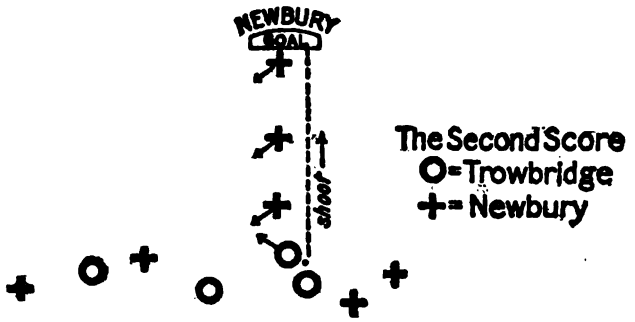
allow for his forward motion, and the missile whizzed by outside the post. Other fair chances suddenly cast by fortune in their path were used to no better advantage.

It was after one of these poor shots that a pair of Trowbridge forwards suddenly appeared in the van of the crowd, pushing straight up the middle of the ice. They came directly for cover-point, Warren in front with the puck, Jenks close behind him. Just before he reached Richards, Warren dropped the puck and made a quick turn to the left which drew, automatically, in the same direction not only the Newbury cover-point, but point and goal as well. Instantly Jenks, scooping up the puck, shot swiftly and straight for the half-guarded goal. The lead of Trowbridge had increased to two!



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Jeff skated out with his captain. "Why shouldn't Weeksie and I go up with you fellows?" he panted. "We're beaten now unless we do something, and with six forwards we may smash it through."

"All right!" returned Jack. "Anything to score now!"

The next time the puck fell into Newbury hands, to the surprise of the Trowbridge defence six forwards came whirling with it up the ice. A dozen yards from the goal Silverton lost his prize to Ricker, but Jeff, bowling into him, recovered it and passed. The goal-keeper swept Henry's shot aside, but Jack managed to elude his opponent and sent the puck back again in front of the net, where Jeff and Pelham both slashed at it together. Jeff's blow, ahead by the fraction of a second, drove the disk home.

The feat was not repeated. During the rest of the match all hands were needed to ward off dangerous attacks on the Newbury goal, and the line of forwards never got well started again. When the play ceased, the puck was behind the Newbury goal, and the score still two to one.

Jack sat in moody silence during the greater

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part of the journey back to town. Jeff watched him for a long time with sympathetic interest.

"What's the use of being sore about it?" asked the cover-point, at length. "They beat us squarely enough."

"That's just what troubles me," answered Jack, gloomily. "We weren't in their class. I'd like to start the season over again. With what I know now, I believe I could make a better showing with the team. I haven't been much of a captain."

"You've done as well as any one could with the material you had. You'll have a chance to get back at them when baseball comes round."

Jack brightened immediately. "And that slippery Jenks who made the goals is their pitcher! We'll take a few base hits out of him, eh, Jeff?"

"You will, of course," answered Jeff. "I shan't be in it" — a modest disclaimer which was destined to prove a truer prophecy than the speaker imagined.

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CHAPTER XVIII

TWO FOOLS

THE mid-year school play followed closely upon the heels of the hockey season, so closely, indeed, that Jack Graham, to whom was assigned the rôle of leading man, was reading his part at rehearsals when the others had mastered theirs. After the Trowbridge game, he applied himself seriously to his task; and such was his natural quickness that he made up in a few days the ground which he had lost. He took Jeff with him to one of the last of the rehearsals, and the visitor brought back to his brother an enthusiastic report of the performance.

"Jack is the whole thing! Gus Perrin will make a giddy frump of a girl, and Goodwin is fair, but Jack gets into his part so well that it seems to belong to him. He laughs and talks and looks as if he were really the person he represents, having a jolly little conversation with two or three people all by themselves. The others are sticks

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beside him. Sandy Saunders roams around with a sickening cast-iron grin, pumps his arms and talks in a machine-made voice like a book, but all the time you feel that it's just Sandy, scared blue and trying hard not to forget his words. Jack simply doesn't care whether there's an audience before him or not. I don't believe he was ever afraid of anything in his life!"

"There are some things I wish Jack were afraid of," said Mr. Richards, quietly.

Jeff did not inquire what these things were. "He's doing all right now, isn't he?"

"He does perfectly well as long as you keep your finger on him," said the teacher; "but what is to happen when the school takes its finger from him, or when he throws it off? Supposing that he gets safely through his school career, how will he use the liberty of college life? Jack may be as brave as a lion, but he has no self-control."

"Oh, he'll steady down when he gets to college," said Jeff, eagerly. "He's the most brilliant fellow in school, good at everything he tackles and popular with everybody. He couldn't be bad and yet have everybody like him."

"I don't say that he is bad. He has a danger-

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ous combination of qualities, and his home surroundings have been far from wholesome. We are all hoping that he will acquire some self-respect, if not sound moral principle, before he leaves us. I like the boy and should welcome the opportunity to be of real assistance to him, but what influence has a schoolmaster?"

Mr. Richards's exclamation was tinged with self-reproach. Since he had begun to learn, under Jeff's unconscious tutelage, to see boys somewhat as they saw themselves, his conception of his duties had changed. He perceived now that if a schoolmaster would be to his pupils something more than a drill master or an animated text-book, he must find the path to their approval. There are but two turns in this path, the first at the square corner of absolute fairness, the second round the gentle bend of genuine sympathy. Mr. Richards was at last facing in the right direction.

The play had a full measure of success. Jack was at his best, and his company supported him in a style which, if not faultless, was at least satisfactory to the friendly audience. Teachers breathed a sigh of relief when it was over, and screwed up the lessons another point. For the

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few weeks that remained of the winter term no more excuses could be offered on the ground of unexpectedly long rehearsals or of petty accidents on the ice that rendered evening study impossible but were no bar to a hard practice on the following afternoon.

Jack Graham fretted under the monotony of work. His successes during the year, with the attentions which his schoolmates lavished upon him, had affected the balance of a mind dangerously sensitive to passing emotions. He felt uneasy and reckless. Pining for excitement, he strolled homeward one afternoon in company with Saunders, who had attached himself to him at the schoolhouse gate. Sandy was talking. By talking is meant in this case something more than mere volubility. Sandy was one of the sillies who, assuming that a reputation for being sad dogs commends them to their fellows, seek to gain such repute by hints and boasts and a show of discreditable knowledge. Jack bore the chatter for a time with only an occasional satirical comment. In front of McCready's saloon he stopped.

"Come in and have a drink!"

Saunders gasped and looked furtively up and

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down the street. He felt like running away, but to run away required almost as much courage as to confess himself a liar — and Sandy was not courageous.

"I just wanted to call your bluff," said Jack, contemptuously. "Now go home and shut up!"

"I'll take you!" answered Sandy, assuming a bold front. "Come on!"

The stay in the saloon was not of long duration, but, short as it was, it proved quite sufficient to show the folly of Sandy's boasts. He stumbled out, leaning heavily on Graham's arm. The sidewalk seemed to rise and fall before him like the deck of an unsteady boat. His face was colorless, his eyes dropped, his parted lips quivered.

"Brace up!" called Graham, sharply. "Don't make a fool of yourself here. You haven't had enough to hurt you." Saunders muttered something about drink on an empty stomach, and, throwing more of his weight on the sustaining arm, dragged his shuffling feet along. Jack grew angry — and frightened. An unoccupied cab turning the corner in front of them offered a refuge; Jack hailed the driver, gave Saunders's address, and pushed his unfortunate companion into the carriage before him.

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On the way Sandy reclined speechless in Graham's lap, while Jack sought frantically for some means of escape from the predicament in which he had involved himself. When the cab stopped at its destination, he was still far from a satisfactory conclusion. He paid the cabman, helped Saunders up the steps, propped him against the doorpost, rang the bell, and ran away!

In truth, an heroic deed! Characterize it as severely as you may, the writer will offer no defence. The dauntless Jack was afraid. He knew that he had played a contemptible part; he knew also that his father, however careless in his own standards, would be furiously angry when news of this escapade reached his ears. He had just reason to fear the extreme penalty from the school authorities. There was one chance in ten that Sandy in his shame would keep the circumstances secret. Jack took this chance — and lost.

The next morning Saunders was not in his seat when the bell rang. Mr. Haven conducted the opening exercises in the hall, Dr. Morgan being occupied with a caller. The first recitation was hardly well started when Jack received a summons to the office.

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Dr. Morgan was seated at his desk. Jack gave a glance at the head-master's face and looked quickly away.

"Shut the door!"

Jack obeyed with alacrity. Physical movement gave a momentary relief from the strain.

"Mrs. Saunders has been here. Is it true that you took Philip to a saloon yesterday afternoon and got him intoxicated?"

"Not exactly, sir. He wasn't intoxicated, he was just sick."

The head-master did not comment on this distinction. "What explanation have you to offer?" he asked in a quiet, even tone that was harder to bear than an explosion of wrath.

"Nothing, except that Sandy was talking big and I couldn't resist the temptation to show him up. He had a little something and couldn't stand it."

"In other words, you took advantage of his weakness to lead him into evil."

"I don't know that it was so very evil," answered Jack, quickly, finding an opening for the argument which he had prepared. "There isn't any rule against what I did. It isn't a crime to

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drink. They serve beer to the boys in the English schools. Harrow has a brewery of its own. I've read in an English school story of a new master's treating his whole house to champagne. My father says they always had beer in the schools he used to go to in Scotland."

"And in England and Scotland you will see more drunkenness than in any other countries in the world," said the head-master. "But I am not going to argue the question of the right or wrong of drinking. You are not in England now, but here in America, where it is not the custom for boys to indulge in alcoholic drinks, much less frequent saloons. The attitude of our schools on that point is unanimous and clearly understood. You know it quite as well as I do. With or without an express rule against it, whether parents are lax or strict, no good school would keep a boy who goes to saloons. But to play upon the folly of a weak boy for the purpose of disgracing him, to buy amusement for yourself at the price of humiliation to his family — that, Jack, is an act of baseness of which I should never have believed you capable."

Jack made no reply, affected less by the re-

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proaches than by the expression of grief with which they were uttered.

"We can easily clear our skirts by expelling you," Dr. Morgan continued, "but what then? What is to become of you if you refuse to learn self-respect and self-control?"

Jack had no answer for these questions. It seemed to him that there was nothing to be said. It was idle to announce that he was sorry, and he would not beg off.

"Are you in the habit of drinking at bars?" asked Dr. Morgan, after a pause.

"No sir; I've done it only twice this year."

A longer silence fell between them, as the headmaster pondered his duty. On the one side lay his obligation to the many, that the moral standard of the school should be maintained; on the other his desire to help the one, coupled with a fear that severity might drive the headstrong but not yet vicious boy to extremes. "Your case will be submitted to the faculty this afternoon," he said at length. "If they decide to expel you, I shall acquiesce in their judgment, for you deserve nothing less. Should the vote be for suspension, I will accept it only on two conditions: You must

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give your word that you will neither visit places where liquor is sold, nor taste any kind of alcoholic drink while you remain with us; and it must be understood that any further misconduct will result in immediate dismissal. Would you agree to these conditions?"

"Yes, sir."

Dr. Morgan rose. "For the present, then, you are suspended. Go home and report to your parents what has happened. Come to my house this evening, and I will tell you of the decision of the faculty."

The discussion that afternoon was warm. Certain members of the faculty insisted that the dignity of the school had been injured and demanded the head of the chief offender. Others, among whom were Dr. Morgan and Mr. Richards, held Graham better worth mending than the dignity of the school. The sentence against both Graham and Saunders was suspension for the rest of the term.

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CHAPTER XIX

ABOUT BASEBALL

RAY was exasperated at Graham's folly, which he looked upon as little short of treachery. "He's 'most as much of an ass as Sandy," he complained to Jeff and Thorne, when the news came out. "He knows how much we depend on him. Who is going to catch Pierce if he gets fired, I'd like to know? Here we have a good show to win the cup with one lap already to our credit by the football, and he would throw the whole business just to show off to another fool! If I had a decent second-string catcher who could be trusted to act like a man, I'd chuck Jack and take my chances. It's astonishing how easily some fellows' heads are turned by a little popularity!"

"You'd better not let him hear that, or he'll chuck himself," said Thorne. "I managed to get along with him through the football season."

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"He isn't going to hear it unless you fellows tell him," answered Ray, sullenly. "I suppose I've got to grin and bear it. There's no chance of my fishing up a bag of gold as you did when you got hold of Young Crusty here." — "Unless you're a star catcher, too," he added, turning suddenly on Jeff.

"As I'm certainly not," returned Jeff, quickly. "I have caught a little in country games, but I don't pretend to be much of a catcher."

"You didn't pretend to be much of a football player," remarked Thorne, "but you were, all the same."

"Oh, I knew I could play football, if I could play anything at all, but baseball is different. It takes a lot of practice with good teams to develop a player, and I've had very little experience. I'm going to try for third-base, if my brother doesn't object."

"He won't object. He's getting to be a regular brick. What have you been doing to him, Jeff? I've heard more good things said of him during the last two months than during the whole time I've been in school."

"He's all right at heart," declared Jeff, stoutly.

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"If you lived with him, you'd know it. He wants to make you fellows work, and that's just what you don't like to do."

"I'd work, fast enough, if I could get marks like yours," replied Thorne in a tone of good-humored pessimism. "It would be too bad to have them go home, though; the shock might kill the family. You're a second Leo Ross."

"You have eighteen points, haven't you? I don't call that very bad."

"Yes, but I don't know how I got 'em or how I'm to get eight more. I'm counting on your brother to put me through Advanced Latin, but I don't see where the rest are coming from."

"That's it!" exclaimed Jeff, triumphantly. "You growl at him because he makes you learn your lessons, and yet he's the only man you can bank on when it comes to the exams!"

"I don't growl at him," protested Thorne. "No one's ever said anything against him in my presence since last fall without getting it good and hard."

"Oh, Crusty's all right, and so is Young Crusty," interposed Ray, who was beginning to think the discussion a little too frank. "What worries me

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is the baseball and that confounded Jack Graham. I say, Russ, isn't there some chance for the crew?"

"I can tell you better three weeks from now; the crews begin work next Monday. Firman and I are pretty heavy for a short race, and the others are an unknown quantity. It will be hard to beat Westcott's."

"Hardie is the only first-crew man back there."

"Yes, but they've got a good oar from Bainbridge, and they always contrive to crawl up toward the top by the time the race comes off. I don't see how they do it with the few fellows they have. — Well, so long! I turn off here."

"I hear that Dunn who played end on the Westcott eleven is a great pitcher," said Jeff, as Thorne left them. "I wonder why he didn't pitch last year."

"He was shut out on account of studies," Ray answered. "I'm not losing any sleep over him. It's Trowbridge that I'm scared of. They've got some lively base-runners out there, and without Jack to nail them, they'd scoot round the bases whenever they got to first."

"Jack ought to behave himself!" declared Jeff. "He's had a lesson now that he can't help remem-

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bering. He's mighty lucky to get off as easily as he did, and he knows it. If he isn't absolutely crazy, he'll turn over a new leaf and be different from now on."

"But he *is* crazy, that's the whole trouble. He'll do pretty well for a few weeks after he comes back, and then fly off the handle again in some new way. I feel almost certain that he won't last through the season. It's no use for me to try to talk with him, for we should both get mad, and then everything would be worse than it was before."

"I've never had any difficulty in talking with him."

"You must be the only one who can do it. I don't see why it should be so, for you two are exact opposites. You just escape being too good, and Jack — well, Jack is always on the edge of being bad. I think you got his favor when you jumped into the football last fall and pulled us out of a hole. Jack isn't one to go back on a fellow he likes, I'll say that much for him."

"And I wouldn't go back on Jack. He was the first fellow in school to treat me decently, and I shan't forget it. There's a lot more good in him

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than bad. He'll outgrow his craziness in time; he isn't like Sandy."

An expression of contempt crossed Ray's face. "I should hope not! The poor idiot! That fellow will never be able to hold up his head in this school again."

The remainder of the winter term wore away. Jack, though banished from school, came frequently to the Richards's, where he worked on geometry with Jeff and got occasional help from Mr. Richards. The schoolmaster did not discourage the intimacy; he had no fears for Jeff, and he hoped much from his influence over Jack. The teacher, these days, thought more of saving than of condemning. He had lost his satisfaction in the strictness of his discipline and the superiority of his class-room knowledge. As for Jack himself, no one could determine from anything he said how far his punishment was proving salutary. From the single conversation in which the subject was discussed, and from occasional hints let fall, Jeff gained the impression that Jack was on probation at home quite as much as at school. His father, though careless enough as to the principles in which his son was reared, was very sensitive

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to public disgrace. He had uttered threats which Jack, who knew their value, took seriously. One circumstance was noticeable: the boy spent very little money, though he seemed as well supplied as ever. When he returned to school at the opening of the spring term, the worn baseball clothes in which he appeared on the diamond served as a target for many a jeer. Jack, who was not at all sensitive on the subject of clothes, received all criticisms with supreme indifference.

Jeff, who was out for third-base, found two rivals possessed of sufficient audacity to enter the field against him. It is almost as hard for a boy new to athletics to obtain fair consideration for his claims as it was in the days of the Roman republic for a *novus homo* to establish himself in public favor against the aristocracy. The presumption always is that the fellow who has succeeded in one sport will succeed in another, and that the unfortunate who has never broken into the lucky circle must be a natural outsider. So it happens not infrequently that the modest lad of real but undeveloped ability is shamed out of the competition before he has had opportunity to dislodge the prejudice against him, while some

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immigrant from another school, who brings with him a reputation largely self-asserted, is petted and pushed and forgiven and carried to victory by the general expectation. Jeff Richards, of course, put forth no such pretensions; but his success at football and hockey counted strongly in his favor, and his name appeared on all the unofficial lists of the members of the nine. His two rivals actually felt it necessary to apologize for their intrusion.

"I'm out for the fun of the thing," Warren explained. "There's got to be some kind of competition. Don't mind me."

"I suppose it's rather fresh in me to try," said Emery Hitchcock, a third class boy, "but I'd like to see what I can do. I played third-base last summer on a nine down at the shore, so I put my name down for the position. I don't expect to make it against you."

"It isn't fresh of you at all," said Jeff, "and you don't want to think so. Just go in and do your best, and don't be frightened out of it. I've never played ball much, and I'm going to be terribly clumsy."

"But you've played other things, and you'll probably do well at baseball when you get into it. You'll have a good show, anyway."

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"And so will you, if you hang on. What kind of pitchers did you come up against last summer?"

"Some pretty good ones. Over at East Harbor they had a fellow who put 'em in like anything. He hadn't many curves, but he could place 'em where he wanted to, and his speed was terrific. We couldn't do anything with him."

"Did you make any hits?"

"I made one occasionally. If you once got your bat in front of the ball, you couldn't help hitting safely."

"That's where you have an advantage over me. I never faced a good pitcher in my life."

"You'll probably do as well as any of them. Last year no one could bat except Jack Graham and Ray. School teams never have any batters. They think a lot more of fielding."

Warren reached over and felt of Jeff's solid biceps, then squeezed Emery's lean but sinewy arm. "That's what tells," he said wisely. "You've got to have a wing to throw from third base."

Hitchcock reddened with confusion. "I know I'm weak," he said hastily, "but I sometimes get 'em across."

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"Why don't you try for second?" asked Jeff. "The throws are short there."

"Williams has second cinched. He was the best in-fielder we had last year. I suppose I'm a fool to try for anything," the boy added, his long-cherished resolution suddenly weakening. "I shall only get laughed at."

"Cut that talk!" commanded Jeff. "You fellows are both going to try, and you're both going to have a show. Ray isn't presenting places on the team to his friends, and no one will laugh at you whose opinion is worth thinking of. If every fellow stayed away because he was afraid he wouldn't make the nine, where would the substitutes and the second team come from? A great ball player or anything else you'll make, if you're scared to think some idiot may laugh at you!"

"I'm not afraid of being laughed at," returned Emery, stoutly.

"Then what are you making so many excuses for? Why don't you grit your teeth and go into the fight to stay as long as there's anything to fight for?"

"That's what I mean to do."

Jeff laughed. "That sounds more like it."

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CHAPTER XX

MORE ABOUT BASEBALL

MEMBERS of school nines usually win their places on their fielding. The same statement holds true, though to a less extent, of the college teams and of amateurs generally; attention is given in practice chiefly to the manipulation of the ball on the field. This is due partly to necessity, partly to the natural tendency to follow the lines of least resistance. Good batting is difficult to teach; it requires a natural ability which very few possess, and practice with good pitchers, who are even rarer than natural hitters. A school seldom contains more than one or two men who have any skill in the pitcher's box. As these must be kept in condition for use in the games and their arms spared in the daily drill, the practice at the nets is likely to be given by some good-natured sub-candidate who tosses in weak balls in a random fashion which offers the batsman the easy satisfaction of hits, but unfits him to meet the swifter,

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more skilful delivery of the selected pitchers whom he faces in games. The professionals manage practice better. Understanding that batting is the offensive and fielding but the defensive of the game, they make every effort to procure men who can hit the ball. The outfield of a professional nine is composed of a trio of batsmen.

Paul Miller, who undertook the thankless task of coaching the Newbury nine, had visions of great improvement in the training of hitters. He had pitched himself in his schooldays; with his own services before the nets and those of certain friends who had made ready promises, he hoped to supply the team with steady practice that would count in base-hits when the league games put his work to the test. After the first day or two, however, he was so taken up with the task of drilling into some of his candidates the simple rudiments of the play of their positions that he found small leisure to devote to the batting; while the friends of easy promises proved equally easy with excuses. The coach soon began to fear that his administration would but repeat the faulty system of the past — a long tiring daily drill on the bases and in the out-field, apparently neces-

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sary to prevent the error column from running into two figures, aimless whacking at puny pitchers before the nets, a short exercise in base-running, and a trusting to inspiration for hits to win the game. It was like training a football team to meet the advance of its rival without giving it any offensive formations.

Jeff was one of the candidates who absorbed the time and tried the patience of the coach. He could throw. His balls came on a line to first base, as an arrow speeds for its target; but here his virtues ended. He was unskilful in trapping the ball and slow in getting rid of it. To be reasonably sure of avoiding errors in handling hits, he had to sink with his heels together, get the ball into his hands, rise, set, and throw — a combination that requires time, and time is precisely what a third-baseman always lacks. In fielding bunts his clumsiness handicapped him sadly; while with a man on third he was so distracted between ambition to cover his territory on the chance of a hit coming his way, and the desire to keep the runner close to the base, that he failed to achieve either result. Emery Hitchcock displayed virtues where Jeff had shown only faults. The younger boy

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was weak in his throw, which arched the diamond in a wasteful curve, but he gathered in the hits with a sure and quick skill, and played his position as if he were used to it.

"It's going to be a close race between you and young Hitchcock," remarked Jack after two or three days of practice. "It will hinge on the batting. If you hit the ball better than he does, you'll get it; if he hits better, he'll get it."

"I can hit Morey easy enough," said Jeff, "but he doesn't count as a pitcher. When Miller pitches, I can't do much with him."

"Didn't I see you drive out a long one to-day?"

"Yes, but that was an accident. When I hit them, they go; the trouble is to hit them."

"You ought to be catching," said Graham. "You're not built right for a third-baseman. With that throw of yours, too, you'd be a hard man to steal bases on."

"We don't need a catcher."

"Well, then, first-base."

"And put off Ray!" This was a derisive exclamation.

"You might try catching, anyway. If I get fired, some one will have to catch."

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"Jack, if you get fired, I'll never forgive you! Think how much we depend on you. You ought to be able to behave yourself for three months."

"Oh, I'll behave. I don't want to get fired. If I do have to go, it's all over with me as far as college is concerned. I've had that straight and clear from my father. But you never can tell what will happen. I may get into some little two-cent scrape without knowing what I'm about, and find myself bounced. I've thought it all over and made my plans for the emergency. That doesn't mean I shan't try hard to stay; but I'm going to be ready for the other thing if it comes, and the nine ought to do the same. Some one must be prepared to step into my shoes, and you're the most promising man we've got."

"What are your plans?"

"I shan't tell you till I have to use them, which I hope will be never."

"Have you said this to Ray?"

"What's the use! He'd only get mad. I can bring it about in an easier way than that. We've got to have a substitute catcher, haven't we? Skillen's no use — he's tried it two years now and hasn't improved five per cent. You're the man

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for the job, and I'll see that you get it. I'll give you plenty of chance to catch Pierce when he's taking his practice, and you can throw to bases while the first is running. Keep right on trying for third, and get all the batting practice you can. If you can learn to hit the ball, you'll win over young Emery yet. If you can't —"

"I shall lose," Jeff finished with a laugh, as Jack hesitated.

"He's a clever little player — in practice. You can't tell how he'll stand up in a game. There's not much to him, and his throws are weak. The games will show what he is."

"I can catch a ball that's thrown at me," said Jeff, "but this scrambling round for it on the ground comes mighty hard for me. Hitchcock has me beaten by a mile when it comes to picking up grounders."

"Your place is behind the bat. Take my advice and learn to catch. You'll have it all your own way next year, if you make a good start now. You got glory enough out of the football to last you through the year."

Jeff accepted Graham's reasoning, but not his conclusion. An ambition cherished for months,

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supported both by the general expectation and by the favor of the leaders, would not yield to a few discouraging experiences. He did not want to serve as understudy to Jack Graham, even with the assurance that an important rôle would be assigned him in the performances of the next season. It hurt his pride to think that a weakling from the third class should oust him from the place which he coveted and which others had assumed would be his. He strove with all his might to show improvement in fielding at the next practice, and was moderately pleased with his success. He made fewer fumbles, and cut down by a portion of a second the time required to get the ball away. But Hitchcock also improved, getting the range from third to first more nearly, and bringing down the elevation of his throw. Ray and Miller decided to work them both in the opening game, in the hope of obtaining ground for comparison of the two in school play.

Jeff's period of test occurred in the first five innings. He had two chances, one of which he accepted gloriously, his throw cutting the air like a rifle bullet shot straight at first. The second ball he fumbled so effectively that it was obviously

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useless to throw at all. He struck out once and made one long hit that brought in two runs. Hitchcock, succeeding him, took three easy balls without error, but hit weakly, once to pitcher and once to second-base. The contest on the whole seemed drawn, though the two-base hit indicated a reserve of strength in favor of the older boy.

A week later, when Jeff had already begun to experiment with Pierce and to take Jack's place behind the plate during the practice in base-running, one of Miller's vaguely promising assistants turned up to redeem his word. It had required no little persistence on the part of the coach to extract Lane from the laboratories of the Medical School and bring him, with his efficient arm and his concise, positive knowledge, to the help of the Newbury boys. His pitching offered practice in not-hitting, and proud indeed was the batsman who singled out the good ones from the bad, and met the ball squarely with his bat. But Lane's assistance was not limited to delivering balls hard to hit and giving instruction in the art of guessing on the reach of a curve. He laid down a few simple rules which he thought would be helpful to the boys in the contests in

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which they were to engage. If these rules appear in points at variance with the practice of the experts, let no one be surprised. Though the skilled mathematician may cover in a single mental leap half a dozen distinct processes, the average schoolboy must take them one by one with laborious care. To try to teach him otherwise is folly. A great football guard may play high, but woe to the tyro who tries to imitate him. The tennis champion returns brilliantly from mid-court, where the beginner is helpless. The professional ball-player scoops up grounders with legs astraddle, or reaches for them far to one side, and swings recklessly into a throw to save a fraction of a second, while the amateur essaying the same trick is inevitably lost. The best coaching is that which best suits the capacity and needs of the individual or team, not that which expounds the methods of the adept.

Lane made his batsman grip his bat a hand's-breadth from the end and stand facing the opposite field, the front foot slightly advanced toward the plate. The object of this direction was to prevent pulling away — a fault very common with green players. The first ball

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pitched, unless it was unquestionably a good one, was to be let go by in hope that it would be called a ball. With the first pitch a ball, the chance was strong that the second would be good; if not, the odds had turned against the pitcher. The batsman was to watch the ball intently from the moment it reached the pitcher's hand, and not to strike unless he felt reasonably confident of hitting.

"When you strike, hit straight for pitcher," Lane repeated to every batter. "You'll save fifty per cent of fouls, while behind pitcher is the only unprotected spot in the diamond." Afterwards he had a talk with Miller on the subject of bunting, urging the coach strongly not to expect all his team to learn the knack of it, and not to allow fellows to try bunting in a game unless they had shown themselves proficient.

"Schoolboys are often told to bunt, when judging by their previous record there isn't one chance in five that they will be successful," he explained, "and there is a good three-to-one chance that they can make some kind of a hit. If a boy can turn the trick, it's all right; if he can't, don't let him waste himself trying. This notion that every man

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who makes first should be sacrificed to second by a bunt is all nonsense. Your poor bunter will miss the ball altogether or poke up a feeble little in-field fly that merely serves to add another out to your record for the inning. A fast, quick-starting base-runner can sneak down to second on the ordinary school catcher, if he'll only learn to slide round behind the bag."

No one on the Newbury team, however well he slid, could steal on Jack Graham with Pierce in the box. Pierce possessed no great variety of curves, but he had what was better, an unusual control of the ball, and he wasted no time with superfluous motions before delivery. With a sweeping out-curve landing breast high in his mitt, Jack would take a single step to gain body-force to his drive, and simultaneously bring his throwing arm past his head in a quick overhand snap that put the ball over second-base well ahead of the fleetest runner on the squad. Jeff could throw nearly as well, but it would not have seemed so to the unskilled observer who watched him at work with Morey. The second-string pitcher usually allowed the runner to gain a good distance down the base-line while he was getting rid of the ball, and then

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delivered it so very low or so very close to the batter as to render quick throwing impossible.

"Never mind!" said Jack, after a practice in which two out of every four runners had stolen second on the substitute catcher. "It's Morey's fault. You do your part. You'd be quite as good as I am if you had Pierce to pitch for you."

"That's very polite of you, but you know it isn't so," retorted Jeff, sharply. "You're miles ahead of me."

"I suppose I'm really better, for I've had more experience and can keep Jim up to his best, but I shan't worry any more about a substitute if anything happens to me."

"What are you always harping on that for? What's going to happen to you?"

"Nothing, I hope," said Jack, soberly. "I only said *If*."

The competition for third went gayly forward. Warren had fallen by the way, leaving the issue to Jeff and Hitchcock. Each candidate was convinced that the other was better, and asserted his opinion frankly. Both had gained in ability to hit the ball, but Jeff, with weight and strength

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behind his bat, drove harder and farther. Emery, on the other hand, was developing a skill in bunting which Jeff could not match. The authorities gave them equal chance in the practice games, and reserved decision.

It was not until the last practice game before the league series that Jeff received his trial behind the bat. Newbury had gained a lead of four runs on Bainbridge Latin, who were finding Pierce difficult to hit. With the game two-thirds over, Jack withdrew to the bench, pleading an injured finger, and Jeff was ordered to take his place. A low third-strike which slipped past in the first half of the seventh inning and gave a lucky Bainbridge man an easy journey to first counted in the error column against the new catcher, though he nailed the same man a few minutes later when he tried for second-base. After this slip-up Jeff had no difficulty in holding Pierce or in keeping the occasional base-runner from taking liberties. He gathered in one hard foul ball fifty feet behind the plate, and in his first turn at the bat with a man on second and two out, sent a liner whizzing past the pitcher's head, that brought in the dubious run.

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If Jeff was quietly pleased at his success, Jack was noisily enthusiastic.

"Didn't I tell you you could catch!" he cried triumphantly, as they gathered up their belongings after the game.

Jeff grunted an acknowledgment of the compliment, but his face showed no enthusiasm. "What good does it do me if I can?" he added. "It won't help me toward making the nine to be a passable substitute for a man like you."

"You're a fool," retorted Jack, frankly, "or else you'd know that it's better to be a good substitute for a position that you can play than a punk regular turning good chances into errors and cursed out by every fellow in school. I thought you had more sense!"

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CHAPTER XXI

AT THIRD-BASE

RICHARDS was the choice of the managers for the Westcott game, the first of the series of two played with each team of the league. The selection was not made without serious discussion and a certain amount of misgiving, but doubt as to Hitchcock's ability to hit the much-vaunted Dunn, together with the general inclination to put more confidence in an experienced athlete than in a younger, less-tried lad turned the scale in Jeff's favor. From the minute the decision was reached, Jeff began to be anxious. The question as to his fitness to play third-base made it especially important that he play it well. With the uncertainty of the game its only certainty, and the strong probability that he would make errors and that these errors might be costly, the prospect showed itself overcast by the shadow of dubious clouds. Jack's frank criticism spoken after the Bainbridge game likewise troubled him; if Jack

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thought his playing "punk," it probably was precisely that.

"Oh, never mind what I said," protested Jack, when called upon for an explanation. "You're all right. Play your best and don't worry. Ray and Miller know what they're about."

Both schools were out in force for the game, with a heavy support of friends and relatives of both sexes. The newspapers having already agreed that Westcott's was likely to gain the supremacy on the river, the boys from the private school considered that victory as good as won. The question as to who should hold the cup was thus to be determined by the result of the baseball series in which the Westcottites, elated by a successful preliminary season and supremely confident in the ability of their pitcher, were in high hopes of gaining the advantage. Trowbridge, on the comparison of the scores, was out of the running.

Emery Hitchcock sat stiffly upright on the players' bench close to Miller and Lane, watching intently as the Newbury men scattered to their places in the field. The selection of Richards for the disputed post had been a sore disappointment to the younger boy; it meant that his chance of

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serving the school, of gaining his N, was cut squarely in two. Unless Richards played a poor game,— a contingency which Emery was too loyal to wish for,— there was small likelihood that the eager lad of the third class would be able to work his way into a league game. He must be content with the prospect of a better fate next year, when the field would be stripped of half the veterans and Richards safely anchored behind the bat. He listened with quiet interest to the comments made by the experts beside him, as Hawke, the first Westcott batsman, went out on a gentle bounder to Williams; but when big Perkins struck at the first ball pitched and drove a two-base hit over Pritchard's head, excitement and anxiety brought him to his feet. He was still standing, a minute later, when Dunn sent a hard grounder into Richards's hands. Jeff fumbled, recovered to throw, saw that it was too late to catch the runner at first, and shot the ball to Stevens at second. Perkins was intercepted as he dived back to the base.

Emery dropped down on the bench with a sigh of relief. "I couldn't have done that," he said, "but I think I should have got Dunn at first."

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Tracy now went out on a weak tap to Pierce, and the Newbury men came in to try their luck with Dunn's curves. The luck was with the Westcott pitcher. Jack Graham made two fouls and struck out, Ray hit feebly to the in-field, and Flanagan dropped an easy fly into the short-stop's hands. In the second inning both pitchers made a clean sweep of the three men who appeared in quick succession at the plate.

"It looks like a battle between Pierce and Dunn," commented Lane, as Reynolds struck out in the beginning of the third.

"They'll get on to Dunn before the game is over," answered Miller, hopefully. "I don't believe he's so dangerous as they pretend."

Gray, the stubby tail-end of the Westcott batting list, now lured four balls out of Pierce and took first in triumph. Hawke hit hard after two strikes had been called on him, but Flanagan got under his high fly. Gray clung closely to first.

"He'll try to steal now if the coacher knows anything," remarked Lane. "I hope Graham is ready for him."

"Trust Jack for that!" answered Miller, easily.

Pierce coaxed a strike out of Perkins on his first

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pitch and then, watching Gray out of the corner of his eye, sent in a wide out. The little runner was off at the first motion of the pitcher's arm, his legs flitting along the base-line like the piston-rods of a speeding locomotive. It seemed hard that such a valiant effort should come to naught, but Graham's throw cut him off a yard from the base.

And now Pritchard gladdened the hearts of his impatient schoolmates by a real hit, a lively grounder past second-base. Brown was unfortunate, retiring ignominiously on called strikes. The luck that passed the right-fielder lighted on the hesitating second-baseman, who, deciding late to strike at a promising one, tapped it toward first, and got credit on the score sheets for a sacrifice hit. Jack Graham waited until two balls had been called, then drove a liner over short-stop's head. Pritchard, who had taken a good lead off second, started like a sprinter and was around third and across the plate before the returned ball reached the diamond. Ray's try for another hit resulted in a foul that fell into Tracy's hands.

The Newbury backers waxed noisily hilarious over this first score. It had come so easily and

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naturally, on the ideal method of good hitting when hits count, that an altogether delightful entertainment seemed to be in prospect. The team could play ball; Dunn was no such wonder as he had been cracked up to be; he was already showing signs of weakening; Westcott's couldn't keep the hitting down. This feeling of complacency grew through the fourth and fifth inning in which Newbury runners reached second and third, while not a single Westcott man got farther than first.

Emery leaned back on the bench, personal disappointment completely swallowed up in joy at the team's success. "We're having the best of them right along," he announced, beaming on the coach. "We're going to win, aren't we?"

"I hope so."

"They're going right now," Lane cut in. "That's as far as it's safe to prophesy if you value your reputation. — Look at that!"

Hawke, first at bat in the sixth, had just put a hit over third-base. He stole second on the first pitch which Graham received in poor position to throw. While he was taking a long lead off his base, hoping for a chance to steal again, Perkins

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smashed a hot liner to the right of second. Williams threw himself across its course, took it with outstretched hands, and sped onward across the bag as Hawke came sliding back a fraction of a second too late. After this unassisted double play, before the cheer-leaders had grown tired of flapping their arms and wrenching their bodies in the effort to force the applause to a worthier pitch, while Miller and Lane were still arguing the question whether it was an example of luck or of skill, and Emery was still capering and bubbling exclamations — Williams juggled an easy grounder from Dunn's bat and let the Westcott pitcher take first. In his effort to help out his team-mate, Tracy got no farther than a long fly to the Newbury left-fielder.

And now, in the second half of the inning, came to pass events of delightful significance to the waiting Newburyites. Richards drove a hissing grounder to right field, where the ball took an ugly bound over Eastman's shoulder and let the runner go to second. Pierce hit to short-stop, who fumbled and threw to first too late to catch his man, Jeff in the meantime taking third. On the first pitch Pierce went down, and Vane,

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fancying himself equal to tackling a double steal, threw to second. Hawke interfered to take the ball, according to coaching directions, but his return went wide and Richards was safe at the plate. Vane then dropped Stevens's third strike and had to throw to first, permitting Pierce to advance to third. Pritchard drove a long fly to right field, and Pierce came home ahead of the throw. Browne was fielded out by Dunn.

In the seventh Westcott's achieved a run, which Newbury in turn offset with another. As his friends scattered to their places at the opening of the eighth, Emery turned eagerly to Lane. "They never can make up three runs. As fast as they get one, we match 'em with another."

"It's all right if they don't go up in the air," responded Lane, cautiously. "You can't tell what a school team will do."

Shorty Gray waited over two strikes and three balls, and was given his base. Hawke hit an easy ball to third which Richards, in overhaste to get it to second for a double play, fumbled. Perkins lifted a little fly just out of the reach of Williams, and the bases were full. Dunn went out on a high foul which dropped into Graham's mitt.

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"That relieves the tension a little," remarked Lane, calmly. "Another of those and the scare will be over." Miller said nothing, but the spot that burned on either cheek betrayed the suspense under which he was laboring. Emery squirmed anxiously on his seat.

Pierce, having got two balls and two strikes on Tracy, essayed to finish him with a swift ball close in by the shoulder. Tracy stepped back and pounded it over third-base. When the Newbury pitcher was again in possession of the ball, Gray and Hawke had scored while Perkins and Tracy stood on third and second respectively.

Vane hit to Stevens, who threw home to cut Perkins off. Perkins, caught between third and home, scurried back toward third. Graham threw to Jeff; at the same moment the runner turned again and sprinted for the plate. Jeff threw — but over Graham's head! Tracy trotted leisurely after Perkins across the plate.

Four runs! In a few seconds the balance had turned. Small comfort was it that the next two Westcott men went easily out. The damage was done. The end of the game was near, and Westcott's was leading. A single bad inning had undone the steady work of seven.

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"It's gone to the bad!" mourned Hitchcock.

"Don't talk like that!" ordered Miller, sharply. "The game's not lost till the last man's out in the ninth inning. We've made runs; we can make some more."

Jeff was first at bat, but he felt too miserable to do himself justice, and Dunn struck him out. He retired to the bench, where he brooded in a corner apart, absolutely wretched. Pierce and Stevens made hits that revived the hopes of the discouraged team, but Pritchard and Browne both failed in the emergency. In their half of the ninth, Westcott's yielded three quick outs — it matters little how — and Newbury came in for the final effort.

Williams struck out, a performance no more agreeable for being expected; but Graham revived the hopes of his schoolmates by a solid hit, and Ray soon after provoked an outburst of blessings by making another. A successful double steal advanced them both a base. Flanagan tried for a home run and achieved a soaring in-field fly which Gray captured. With two out and men on second and third, Jeff Richards came to the plate to win or lose the game. His despondency had

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fallen from him; he felt only an infinite yearning to retrieve himself, a savage determination to wrest victory from defeat. On either side the cheering had entirely ceased; neither cheer-leaders nor cheer-makers had room in their excited minds for anything but the crisis at hand. Their comments were spontaneous and exclamatory.

Dunn understood well that the contest was now reduced to a struggle between himself and the single batsman before him. He sent in his balls deliberately, and with the utmost care. The first one Jeff recognized as a deceiver. "One ball!" The second proved no better. "Ball Two!" The third looked promising, but being in doubt he let it go by. "Strike One." The next pitch seemed right; he swung at it, though a little late. The bat cracked, the ball shot out on a line toward right field a yard inside first-base. The Newburyites screamed with joy, the base-runners darted away on their homeward journey. But alas! the running and the rejoicing were alike premature. Hit on a curve, the liner swerved to the right and touched the ground outside the foul lines. Instead of a hit bringing in two victorious runs, it was only a foul that counted as a second-strike!

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Jeff drove the next ball pitched straight at Hawke, who fielded him out at first.

The score:—

WESTCOTT'S

	AB	R	BH	TB	PO	A	E
Hawke, 2b	5	1	1	1	2	2	1
Perkins, lf	4	1	2	3	1	0	0
Dunn, p	4	0	0	0	1	2	0
Tracy, 1b	4	1	1	2	11	0	0
Vane, c	4	0	0	0	7	1	1
Silverton, 3b	4	0	1	1	1	2	1
Eastman, rf	4	0	0	0	2	0	0
Reynolds, cf	4	0	0	0	1	0	0
Gray, ss	2	1	0	0	1	3	1
Totals	35	4	5	7	27	10	4

NEWBURY

	AB	R	BH	TB	PO	A	E
Graham, c	4	0	2	2	5	2	0
Ray, 1b	5	0	3	3	11	0	0
Flanagan, cf	5	0	1	1	2	0	0
Richards, 3b	5	1	1	1	0	1	3
Pierce, p	3	1	1	1	2	3	0
Stevens, ss	3	0	1	1	2	4	1
Pritchard, lf	4	1	1	1	1	0	0
Browne, rf	4	0	0	0	2	0	0
Williams, 2b	3	0	0	0	2	3	1
Totals	36	3	10	10	27	13	5

Innings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Westcott's	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	—5
Newbury	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	—4

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Of course the Westcott following gave themselves up to a happy pandemonium, while the Newburyites looked on in dismay and reviled Richards for losing the game. A fraction of an inch difference in the direction of the drive along the first base-line, and behold the foul transformed into a two-bagger, two more runs on the score sheet, the game abruptly ended, and Jeff's woful errors atoned for by masterful hitting! Yet, as the fraction of the inch was on the wrong side, the disappointed schoolboys gave little thought to the narrow margin by which the game was lost, and cherished bitterly the memory of the errors.

"Baseball luck!" remarked Lane, cheerfully. "The better team beaten! It often happens so. Look at the difference in hits! It was a good game all the same. I'm glad I came."

Jeff wasn't glad he came. At that moment he would have given all his slender stock of pocket-money in a lump, with a promise never to play ball again, if at this cheap price he could buy the right to alter at two little points his record for the day. The fellows on the team said nothing, but their very silence was vituperative. Jack Graham tried hard to be kind, but his kindness

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hurt. "Don't mind!" he said; "any one may have a bad day. It wasn't your fault."

"It'll be my fault if I ever play third-base again!" returned Jeff, savagely. "I'm the worst kind of a dub."

Four days later the nine went to Trowbridge for their second game. Jeff was a substitute now, very humble, very much down on his luck, but secretly not averse to another trial. As he loafed on the bench through nine hard-fought innings, however, watching with sharp eyes every move of the game, he assured himself that Emery Hitchcock was far and away his superior as guardian of the third corner of the diamond. The contest proved anything but the easy affair that the prophets had foretold. Jenks, the Trowbridge pitcher, was too much for the weaker batters on the list; Graham, Ray, and Flanagan managed to cope with him successfully, but the errors behind him on the whole contributed more to his defeat than the batsmen who faced him. The new third-baseman made but one inconsequential error out of four chances, and with two good bunts and a base hit led the Newbury batters. Jack Graham was at his best, and Pierce pitched his

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regular steady game. So, with the help of the shifty goddess who often insists in taking a third hand in the play of amateurs, the Newbury boys piled up three unearned runs in the fifth and emerged from the ninth with the score eight to four in their favor.

"They'll give Westcott's a hard tussle on Wednesday," declared Ray, as the leaders discussed the game on the train. "They'll have to get rid of that short-stop, though. He was an awful handicap. I told their captain that any kid from a dormitory nine would do better."

"Jenks is every bit as good as Dunn," remarked Graham. "Piercie here can put it over either of them."

"It's all in the catching," said Pierce, modestly.

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CHAPTER XXII

INSTRUCTOR ROOT, PH.D. (*Bonn*)

THE victory over Trowbridge, while comforting to school pride, but emphasized the crime of Jefferson Richards in throwing away the Westcott game. Despite the fact that Ray assumed full responsibility for playing him at third, and his friends let no harsh criticism pass unchallenged, to the school at large he was a fallen idol. His glorious deeds as half-back, though not forgotten, were sadly overshadowed by his inglorious failure as third-baseman. On the football field a "peach," on the diamond he was merely a "lemon." The irreverent urchins who played scrub with a tennis-ball before school and at recess on four square rods of field, invented a new name for an overthrow; they called it a "Crusty heave." The sarcastic allusions of the infants did not come to Jeff's ears until several weeks had elapsed and events had come to pass which in a measure deprived them of their sting. Had he heard them

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at the height of their vogue, they could hardly have increased his unhappiness. What he lamented was not the loss of prestige, but the fact of failure. He knew that he had given the team a serious set-back in their struggle for the cup, and the recollection of that fatal inning and that abominable throw haunted him like a relentless ghost. In the midst of a recitation he would start and shudder as his error rose unsummoned from the depths of memory and glared at him; he brooded over it in the silence of the study while sitting before his open books. But for that wretched misplay, Newbury, as the victor in two games, would be well advanced toward the prize, while now, if Westcott's beat Trowbridge in the next game, the chance of gaining more than a barren tie was insignificantly small. He couldn't forgive himself, and he couldn't forget.

"Look here, Jeff," said Mr. Richards one evening, — it was the day on which Westcott's played Trowbridge, — "don't you think it is about time you ceased to mope over that lost game? You haven't been yourself for a week."

"I can't help thinking about it," answered Jeff, gloomily.

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"You can if you will. It is neither manly nor what you call sportsmanlike to allow yourself to be permanently depressed by a petty accident of a baseball game. If I had given way to discouragement every time I met misfortune or disappointment, I should have failed of what little success I have been able to gain."

Jeff was silent. He was thinking that the accident was not petty, and that his brother, who had lifted himself in a few months from a position of great unpopularity to one of considerable esteem, and had just secured a publisher for his "Latin Lessons," might well feel superior to other people's disappointments.

"If you aren't careful, Leo Ross will win the Bankart prize," said the teacher.

"He'll win it anyway."

"That seems to me a rather cowardly attitude to take. You remind me of an athlete who gives up as soon as he sees that a rival is ahead of him. Leo certainly has the advantage over you in one respect; he wouldn't waste five minutes in whining over spilt milk."

"Leo Ross isn't a boy; he's an old man!" answered Jeff, vehemently. "What is the school

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to him except a place where he can get what he wants! He wouldn't care if we lost all our games, as long as his own plans weren't interfered with."

Six months earlier this speech would have drawn from Mr. Richards a didactic lecture on the true and the false ideals of school life; but he had taken a long step forward on the path of his profession during these months. "Let us consider your fault from its worst side," he said quietly; "then after seeing exactly where you stand, you will be able to take a reasonable view of your present duty. Have you done anything to be ashamed of?"

"Yes. I made a crazy error that let in two runs, lost us the first Westcott game, and probably lost us the championship and the cup."

"That sounds serious. Did you intentionally misplay?"

"Of course not."

"Did you force yourself into the game?"

"No, they put me in."

"Did you try to keep Hitchcock out?"

"Certainly not. I said all along he was the better man."

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"Then you are morally no more responsible for your error than I am. Do the players blame you?"

"No, they try to make it as easy for me as they can; it isn't what they think of me, but what I think of myself, that troubles me."

"A good sportsman is supposed to take victory modestly and defeat cheerfully. You played the game knowing that some such mishap might occur. Now that it has occurred, the only manly course is to swallow your disappointment and think no more about it. Isn't that true?"

"I suppose so."

"Now, what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to do just that!" declared Jeff, squaring himself and opening his book with a savage snap.

"There we are!" concluded the schoolmaster in triumph. "The only question now is whether you have grit enough to put your purpose through."

Just then the door-bell rang, and a minute later Jack Graham appeared, smiling, at the door.

"I came in to give Jeff news of the Trowbridge-Westcott game," he explained. "Ray telephoned over to-night."

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"Who won?" demanded Jeff, eagerly.

"Trowbridge, ten to six."

Jeff's eyes sparkled. "Isn't that great!"

"It puts us right where we were at the beginning. Each school has one more game with each of the others. The next round will settle the question finally. We ought to beat Trowbridge again on Saturday."

"And you can beat Westcott's next time with me out."

"Or with you in," said Jack.

The conversation now wandered from baseball and the cup to class day and the college examinations. Mr. Richards gave it a new turn by asking suddenly, "By the way, how do you like Dr. Root?" Dr. Root was acting as substitute for Mr. Haven, who was ill.

"Oh, very well," Jack answered soberly enough, but the eye that was sheltered from Mr. Richards's observation winked craftily at Jeff.

"He is a very fine scholar," went on the teacher. "I understand that he passed a remarkable examination when he took his degree at Bonn."

"I wonder how Mr. Haven is getting on," put in Jeff. "I hope he isn't very sick."

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"He won't be back for a week at least," said Mr. Richards. "We were fortunate to find so good a man as Dr. Root to take his work."

Jack announced that he must get home to his lessons, and Jeff attended him downstairs.

"Wasn't I wise about Root!" Jack exclaimed, chuckling, as they lingered at the door. "Like him? Well, I guess!" And he chuckled again. "He's pretty easy, isn't he?"

"Easy! He's more fun than a monkey. He can't see more than five feet away, and you can work him with any old bluff. If it weren't for the exams coming so soon, no one would look at a book."

"You want to be careful," warned Jeff. "You can't afford to take any risks, you know."

"What risk is there? He isn't going to run around proclaiming that he isn't equal to his job. They haven't any right to put us under such a fool. I could teach the class more myself."

"All the same, you keep out of it!" called Jeff down the steps; "do you hear?"

"I hear!" came back the laughing voice in the darkness. "Good night!"

The sensible counsel of his brother coupled with

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the good news from Trowbridge helped Jeff speedily out of the slough of morbid self-accusation into which he had fallen. Freed from worrying responsibilities, he buckled down to work in earnest. Though with a monstrosity like Leo Ross in the running, he had no hope of winning the prize, he wanted to give a good account of himself for the sake of his brother. On the playground he performed the tasks given to him with cheerful readiness, glad to serve the team in any capacity, and learning what he could of catching in anticipation of the needs of another season. Too often enjoyment is crowded out of a game by anxiety as to its outcome. The match which the Newbury second played with a similar team from Westcott's — and lost — was the jolliest contest of Jeff's school year.

Meantime the fun with Mr. Haven's substitute grew apace. At first it had been of a mild and comparatively harmless character — an absurd question to raise a laugh, a ridiculous excuse solemnly offered, the adroit starting of a time-consuming discussion. The subject of Grimm's Law was early discovered to be Dr. Root's hobby. A gentle push artfully applied

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served to plunge the pedagogue into a discourse on this topic which was good for at least ten minutes. When this failed, there were always the German Universities, the German army, and Emperor William as starting points for questions and debate. The fellows who were in the habit of occupying at recitation the front bench close under the teacher's desk would work it forward until they could rest their toes on the edge of the platform. Dr. Root used to move it back before each recitation only to find it pushed forward again when the hour was half over, and its occupants skulking under cover of the desk. Slight disturbances of an obscure origin began to occur. As the culprit was rarely discovered, and if discovered never properly punished, flagrant acts of disorder were soon added to the programme. Audacious schemes against the peace of the room were contrived in advance and coolly carried to a successful conclusion.

When Dr. Morgan led the school each morning in the repetition of the Lord's Prayer in Latin, he was not aware how seriously he was offending against the spirit of the petition *Et ne nos inducas in temptationem* by planting poor Dr. Root in Mr.

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Haven's chair and leaving him to his own feeble devices. It must be acknowledged, without essaying a defence of the boys, that the substitute was a very unfair temptation to put in their path. A haggard, stoop-shouldered man, with face pale from close study, eyes hidden behind thick glasses, mustache drooping untrimmed over a wide mouth, coat sleeves hanging loosely upon bony arms, not always cleanly shaven and frequently negligent as to finger nails, he was not a figure to inspire respect. His weakness of rule offered a standing invitation to horse-play which the best-intentioned could not always resist. Though the better lads were assailed at times by a feeling of pity for their victim and protested against the acts of the most wanton of their fellows, when the ragging was once under way they seemed powerless to check it or to keep wholly out of it. If not actually cruel at heart, the Anglo-Saxon boy takes almost as readily to teacher-baiting as the Spaniard to bull-fighting.

Dr. Root enjoyed some respite from persecution as the day of the last game with Trowbridge drew near, and the thoughts of both players and non-players dwelt anxiously on its outcome. Their

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faith was pinned to Pierce and Jack Graham; what had been done once could be done again. The issue of the contest did not disappoint their hopes. Jenks, who had pitched in two games close together, was handicapped by a lame arm, and retired after five innings. His successor proved a puzzler to the Newbury batters, but they had already obtained a lead of six runs, and the margin thus gained, though considerably diminished, carried them safely through. Jack led in the batting, stole two bases at critical times, and played faultlessly behind the bat. He was the hero of the hour. The adulation poured upon him by the small Newbury contingent present at the game, crowning a year of extraordinary personal success, would have turned a far steadier head than Jack's.

On the way home certain members of Dr. Root's German class got their heads together and devised a scheme to relieve themselves from the labor of preparing Monday's lesson. It was the custom of the school to exempt a boy from reciting if he presented his excuse in writing at the opening of the hour. On Monday morning, Dr. Root received written excuses from every member of his

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class. Driven by unbearable conditions, the teacher had carried his trouble to a colleague and had been counselled to quell the disorders with a heavy hand. As he was puzzled to apply this advice to the present emergency, he decided to give the class a long task to be done in recitation and keep after school all who failed to prepare it satisfactorily. Wilcox with half a dozen others was sent to the board with English sentences to be rendered into German. He wrote, "Dr. Root is an easy mark;" then turning round, he asked innocently, "What sentence was I to begin with, sir?"

"The tenth," answered the teacher, after consulting his book.

"Oh, I've started wrong!" said Wilcox, and erased what he had written. Broad grins appeared on the faces of the watching boys. Saunders burst out into a guffaw and was sent from the room. The quieting effect of this unusual treatment lasted for several minutes. Presently Graham was seized with a desire to say something to Ray. He asked permission to leave his seat to deliver his message, and was refused. Whereupon Jack scribbled a note on a half sheet of

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paper, caught the attention of Ray, who was on the other side of the room, and marched up to the desk to be helped over a fictitious obstacle. While standing close beside the fount of knowledge, apparently intent on the explanation which he was receiving, he slipped his note into the yawning pocket of the teacher's coat. Ray was the next perplexed scholar. He took the place behind the desk just vacated by Graham, and holding his book open with one hand, with the other removed the note from its resting-place. The few boys who observed the manœuvre were convulsed with delight. Two of them paid the penalty for causeless laughter by expulsion from the room with instructions to appear after school to make up work.

On the whole, Dr. Root felt pleased with the improvement in his discipline. Now and then a match-head would snap beneath his feet as he scraped them on the floor under his desk. Occasionally a flying piece of chalk, coming from nowhere and impelled by no one, would crack against the wall. Boys asked questions which betrayed an ignorance incredible and wholly inconsistent with the reputation for good scholarship which

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Newbury boasted. Yet the day was certainly better than some of its predecessors.

The after-school class was large and fairly industrious. So thought Dr. Morgan, as he glanced into the room, wanting a word with Dr. Root, but deciding to watch the baseball practice for a time and return later. Every one seemed at work except Graham and Wilcox, who were sharpening lead pencils — and had been for fifteen minutes. Their aim was to tire the teacher out and get gloriously off with tasks undone. The other boys finished their exercises and slipped gradually away, leaving the two conspirators scrawling sentences and rubbing them out. Save for the silent occupants of the room the building seemed deserted. Through the window came the moaning rumble of trolleys on the distant street, with an occasional shout from the playground at the other side of the schoolhouse. Dr. Root crouched over his desk, his short-sighted eyes glued to the page of his book, looking as if he never would straighten up again. Jack's courage faltered.

"He'll stay here till he's hungry," he whispered to his confederate. "Let's get busy."

The exercises were handed in. The pair went

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forth casting a last glance behind them at the bowed head as they closed the door.

"I'd like to lock him in!" exclaimed Wilcox, savagely.

Jack's eyes flashed bright with a sudden inspiration. "We can tie him in," he cried. "Get some cord from the laboratory and I'll find a stick downstairs."

In a minute the materials were at hand. They looped the cord around the door-knob, tied the stick fast, twisted it till it bound tight, and left it pressing door and jamb parallel with the plane of the floor. Then they listened.

"He won't wake up for an hour yet," grumbled Wilcox.

"We'll knock him up," returned Jack, and pounded on the door.

They waited until they saw the door-knob twist under Dr. Root's hand and heard his exclamation of surprise as the door resisted his effort to open it; then they scampered along the hall and dived down the basement stairs. As they reached the bottom they plunged squarely into a man who was on his way up. It was Dr. Morgan.

"Why this wild haste, Jack?" asked the doc-

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tor, pleasantly. "You didn't seem in any great hurry when I saw you some time ago in Dr. Root's room."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Jack, "I'm late for practice" — and darted away.

Around the first corner he halted abruptly and looked hard at his companion, his face blank with consternation.

"He's got us!" groaned Wilcox.

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CHAPTER XXIII

THE END OF THE ROAD

Dr. Morgan continued up the stairs, musing on the approaching interview with Dr. Root. Echoes of the stories which for days had been vivaciously bandied about among the boys had at last reached the ears of the responsible head of the school. Since Mr. Haven was to return on Tuesday, there was no danger that the disturbances would continue, but the head-master felt that he owed some apology for the conduct of the boys, and that it was his duty as a schoolmaster of experience to give the novice a little kindly advice that might help him to greater success in his next venture. As he neared the door of Mr. Haven's room, he was startled to see it barred and shaking under the prisoner's attack.

"Wait!" called the head-master. "I'll let you out." He twisted the stick a quarter of a turn backward and threw open the door. Dr. Root

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stood before him, with red face and eyes staring wildly, his whole figure trembling with anger.

"The hoodlums locked me in," he gasped. "Actually locked me in! It is an outrage!"

"I'm very sorry," said Dr. Morgan. "Who were they?"

"I don't know. They're all bad, the worst set of boys I ever saw in my life!"

"Who went out last?"

"Wilcox and Graham."

"When?"

"Ten minutes ago."

The head-master became silent; not so Dr. Root, who, though crammed with indignation, was far from being too full for utterance. "The treatment I have had to put up with from these barbarians," he sputtered, "is beyond belief. It couldn't be worse in a reform school. They have no respect for authority, no industry, no decency!"

"Mr. Haven never found them insubordinate, nor any other teacher as far as I know."

"In other words, it is my fault. They offer violence to the authority of the school in my person, and you defend them."

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"I do not defend them," said Dr. Morgan, calmly. "They will be punished, and the punishment will be severe; but I do regret that you did not see fit to inform me of the disturbances as soon as they began."

"It wouldn't have helped me," snapped Dr. Root, now white with rage. "A school that keeps such hoodlums in it will always have disturbances. I suppose they know how far they will be allowed to go — and how much support will be given to a teacher. I wish *I* had known before I came here!"

The head-master threw back his head quickly, but pity for the unfortunate, overwrought victim of his own incompetence checked the retort that trembled on his tongue. "I was coming to tell you that we expect Mr. Haven back to-morrow," he said quietly. "You will not have to face the vicious class again."

"I wouldn't in any case!" snorted Dr. Root. — "Though I shall be curious to know," he added with sarcasm, "how these two ringleaders are punished."

"I think I can tell you," answered Dr. Morgan, sadly. "One will be expelled and one suspended."

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"They both ought to be expelled," grumbled the vengeful substitute.

The next morning Dr. Morgan disposed of Wilcox in a short interview, and sent for Jack Graham.

"Did you tie the door of Dr. Root's room yesterday?" began the head-master.

Jack made no answer.

"I don't ask for information, and it will make no difference in the penalty whether you acknowledge your guilt or not. The evidence is unfortunately too strong to yield to a mere denial. You are in school, as you well understand, on probation. This insolent act, which really amounts to open defiance of the authority of the school, brings the probation to an end."

"I'm fired, then?"

"I do not know what form the vote will take, whether expulsion or dismissal, or mere request to your parents to withdraw you. I shall call a meeting of the faculty to advise me, after school to-day. Whatever their opinion, I shall insist on your removal from this school. We have been patient too long. You must take the path of your own choosing, and learn from bitter experience what we hoped to teach you in an easier way."

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Jack lifted his eyes from the desk to the headmaster's face. "I don't blame you," he said, "but it's pretty tough on me."

"It's tough on us all, Jack. We have tried hard to save you."

The silence which fell between them continued for nearly a minute. Then Jack asked, "Is that all you wish to say to me, sir?"

"I think so. I could only repeat what I have already said many times without effect."

"It may have an effect some time," said Jack, as he rose and held out his hand. "Good-by, sir. Thank you for your kindness to me."

"Good-by, Jack. I'm glad you don't consider me an enemy. Remember, you have only to learn self-mastery and let the best in you rule the worst, to become a man of whom we shall all be proud."

"Thank you, sir," answered the boy, moving away. At the door he turned to ask, "May I speak to Jeff Richards a moment?"

"Certainly. Call him out."

Jeff shut the door of the schoolroom behind him and gazed with wonder into Jack's grave face. "What's up?"

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"I'm fired."

"What for?"

"Yesterday Coxie and I tied Root into his room."

"Jack!" Into the exclamation were condensed sorrow and reproach in equal parts.

"I want you to stay here until after the faculty meeting, and then come over to see me. Don't come later than quarter to three, for I can't wait. Will you do it?"

"Of course I will."

"So long, then!" And Jack moved off down the hall.

The news, which spread rapidly, was canvassed at recess by solemn groups. The calamity to the school favorite — and Jack, being generous, daring, light-hearted, keen-witted, and an all-round athletic hero, held this place in the hearts of his mates — caused universal grief. Soon other feelings found expression, — impatience with the penalty which seemed excessive, wrath at Dr. Root, whose imbecile weakness had made the event possible. As the seriousness of the loss to the nine became understood, maledictions began to light on Jack's own head. Ray, who saw his team

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stripped of its strongest bulwark on the eve of the critical game, was furious at what he considered no better than treason. Jack might at least have behaved himself for another week! Tongues wagged wildly and arguments flew. Optimist clashed with pessimist over the chance of victory, but no one was utopian enough to assert that Jack's place could be filled.

Jeff hung round the corridors after school, fingering his watch and counting the minutes as he waited for the opening of the door behind which the faculty was deliberating. His heart was heavy with sorrow. He had liked Jack Graham from the day when Jack gave the first cordial word which he had received in school. As the months slipped away and the two were thrown more and more together, this feeling had developed into something stronger and closer. He couldn't explain Jack, and he did not try to. He had loved him for his personality, taking no account of faults and virtues. He loved him no less in his misfortune. Expulsion from school would bring a great change into his friend's life, a change which he feared would be for the worse. Strong-willed and high-spirited, impetuous to the

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point of recklessness, Jack was very unlikely to continue long in the rôle of submissive penitent. What would he do now, with college gates closed against him?

It was half-past two when the teachers emerged from their retreat. Jeff drew his brother aside. "What was done?"

"Dr. Morgan will ask his parents to withdraw him. It was the best we could do. Do you expect to see him this afternoon?"

"Yes."

"Tell him to come to see me. I shall be glad to help him if I can."

Jeff promised to deliver the message, but he failed to keep his word, for reasons which will appear later. He hurried along to meet his appointment, running a good part of the distance. As he turned into the short street on which his friend lived, he saw Jack strolling toward him with a bulging suit-case swinging from his hand and a rain coat over his arm.

"I thought I'd meet you," he called cheerfully. "What news?"

"Your father will have to withdraw you," panted Jeff.

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"No, he won't."

"Why not?"

"Because I'm going to withdraw myself. I'm off for pastures new."

Jeff stared. "Where?"

"I can't tell you. If I told you, you'd know, and I don't want anybody to know. In fact, I don't know myself. — Don't stand there gaping! Walk along with me. Here, you carry my coat!"

They were standing now at the corner, waiting for a car. "You're going to run away?" asked Jeff at last.

"I don't call it just that. I'm going to seek my fortune. My father knocked about the world a good bit before he settled down, and I have his blood in my veins. It's no use for me to hang round here any longer, where I've queered myself so thoroughly. I'm old enough to go to work. I'll have a try at the thing, anyway."

"And do better," said Jeff, impulsively.

"I hope so. If I don't, you won't hear from me. Here we are; climb in."

Not a word was exchanged as the crowded car bumped and plunged along its short route, but each was thinking hard and each was ready to

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break the silence when, on the change to the elevated at its hour of light traffic, they found themselves comparatively isolated.

"I suppose you haven't much money," said Jeff. "I've got a little with me. You'd better take that."

Jack laughed lightly as he dropped his hand on his friend's knee. "I've got money enough. There was some in a savings-bank in my name. I drew that out this morning, and I've been saving my allowance for the last three months. Thank you all the same."

He hesitated, and his face clouded over. "There are two things that trouble me," he began again, "and only two. I hate to leave my mother to cry her eyes out about me, but I couldn't tell her what I was going to do. I've written her a letter which I want you to take over to her this evening. Jolly her up if you can. Tell her I'm off for a new start, and make her think it's all right."

"I'll try," said Jeff, doubtfully, as he put the letter carefully away in his pocket. Convinced as he was that Jack's scheme was all wrong, and certain that he should play very clumsily the part of comforter, he shrank from the task laid upon

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him. But Jack, he knew, had gone too far to turn back, and the point would not bear argument. "I suppose the other thing is about your father?"

At this Jack laughed aloud. "No, he won't trouble himself about me. The other thing is the baseball. I've had my doubts about going to college for some time, but I did want to finish out the season. You'll have to catch the Westcott game, Jeff."

"I suppose so, but I hate to do it. I made such a mess of things the last time I played!"

"You'll do it perfectly well. Catching is your natural position; third-base wasn't. Just make up your mind when you start off that you're going to play well, and you'll come through with flying colors. Look out for Pierce's drops; they come low. Get in front of them and put your mitt right on the ground. When you throw, keep the ball down; you've a tendency with that mighty wing of yours to drive them over. Then if you get any high fouls with men on bases, be sure you return the ball at once to cut off stealing. Remember those three things."

They left the train at Summer Street and climbed to the surface. Jack carried his suit-case

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to the curbstone, took his coat from Jeff's arm, and held out his hand. "Here's where we part," he said cheerfully. "Hustle across to Winter Street and get back to whatever practice there is left. I'll write you sometime, if I make good."

"Jack!" cried Jeff, beseechingly, "don't go! It would be a great deal better to stay at home and fight it out here."

"No, it wouldn't, and don't try to preach to me, because it won't do any good. Now clear out. I'll watch you out of sight."

Jeff dropped the hand that he was holding and turned forlornly away. At the corner he looked back across the press of vehicles at the figure standing defiantly erect at the edge of the sidewalk. Jack waved a salute; Jeff answered it, then buried himself in the crowd.

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CHAPTER XXIV

THE SECOND-STRING CATCHER

JEFF returned that evening from his call on Mrs. Graham crushed in spirit and wavering between a disposition to detest Jack and an inclination to find excuses for him. He sought consolation by pouring out the story to his brother.

"Now what do you think?" he demanded. "Will he stay till he becomes rich and famous and then come back, as they do in the novels, or will he just go to pieces?"

"He is more likely to run through his money and drift back the worse for his experience," answered Mr. Richards.

"He'll never do that, I'm sure," returned Jeff, quickly. "It wouldn't be like him. Isn't there a chance that he'll land on his feet somewhere, steady down, and make a success of himself? There's nothing he can't do if he really tries."

Mr. Richards shook his head. "A very small chance, I'm afraid, but we'll hope for the best.

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Poor Jack! I wish we could have done something for him."

Baseball proved a beneficent distraction to Jeff during those days of grief. He threw himself into the practice with all the fervor that was in him. He knew that the school had little faith in him, that as successor to a brilliant catcher he could hope for no better fortune than a passable and inconspicuous performance of the part which he was forced to assume, that he might again suffer the ignominy of losing a Westcott game; but he had at least something to do and think of, a defence to oppose to the dejection that preyed upon his spirit.

With the coming of the critical day the courage of the school brightened. Word had gone round that Richards was after all not so bad behind the bat; he might do very decently. Pierce was there, anyway, with Ray and Flanagan to make hits, and Williams to pluck the enemy's hits from the ground, if not to make any himself. Belief is always easy for those who wish to believe (so Cæsar said; you can read it in the "Gallic War"), and the Newbury boys, with the crisis at hand and the cup at stake, suddenly became very

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eager to believe. The crew had dropped out at the preliminaries, losing second place by a couple of yards — all because Danvers was so absorbed in driving his men that he forgot all about the tiller lines on the last hundred yards and let the starboard side pull the boat out of her course. Newbury having thus definitely failed on the water and Westcott's definitely won, hope was of necessity centred on the ball game. The patriotic spirits whose self-imposed task it is to keep the slack-minded up to the proper pitch of enthusiasm, went to and fro among their mates, repeating vigorously the slogan, "We've got to win! we've just got to win!" and shooing the uncertain into line.

Whether driven by the efforts of the whips, or obeying the impulse of their own hearts, the Newbury lads flocked to the American League grounds in unprecedented strength, some confident, more hopeful, all cherishing the conviction that their presence was necessary to the nine's success. Even Leo Ross, who had never before wasted an afternoon on school frivolity, accepted one of Jeff's complimentary tickets and paid a substitute to do his work at the telegraph office that he might have

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a share in the last field-day of his class. Six teachers graced the occasion. Dr. Morgan chatted pleasantly with Mr. Westcott high up in the great pavilion. In the front row behind the press-boxes Messrs. Haven and Richards sat side by side, the former still weak from his illness, but unwilling to be cheated of the game, the latter making up for ignorance of the fine points of play by close observation and intelligent listening. Graduates drifted in from down-town offices to see how the younger generation was coming on. Smart collegians appeared in numbers, animated equally by a desire to prove their loyalty and a willingness to display themselves to their younger brethren. They clustered together in a delightful fellowship, and those who wore club hatbands hobnobbed freely with the uninitiated, pretending for an hour or two that they were no better than common folk. Somewhere in the audience Mr. John Smith occupied an inconspicuous place, uncertain whether his sympathies were with or against Newbury. The fact still rankled that his league — he thought of it as his even now — had ousted its founder from office after a single term of service, and that his own school, from which he

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had a right to expect ample recognition, had given him a most ungrateful cold shoulder. Yet it was Thorne, not Ray, who had rebuffed him, and if Newbury lost, Westcott's must win — an event hateful to contemplate. On the whole, though there was evidently nothing in it for him, ex-president John was inclined to favor Newbury. He would see how they played before letting his sympathies go.

Miller and Lane were on the bench when the game opened, the former very nervous and very much worried, the latter as coolly intent on the play as a veteran manager of professionals. Lane had dropped in on the practice two days before and had distributed several practical hints; to Jeff some advice about taking his steps before throwing, to Stevens and Pritchard an injunction not to drop the shoulder when at bat, to base-stealers instructions in the art of sneaking round the tagging arm when sliding to bases, to the captain a simple trick to catch a man at second which he thought could be used with success. He was on hand now to see if his coaching would bear fruit, and likewise to enjoy the sport — for Lane was a man who could find enjoyment in a game

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even when his favorites were losing. There was an inspiration in his quiet smile and curt comment that Miller's violent harangues could not impart. His brief "On your toes now, boys! Make a clean start!" put every player on his mettle.

Jeff felt a little nervous in his responsible position at the outset, especially after Hawke's foul tip, which would have made a third strike, escaped his mitt. But when Hawke popped up a fly to the in-field and Perkins struck out, his composure returned. As he found that his mitt settled right for Pierce's low ones and his practice throws to second went straight to their mark, he ceased to doubt himself and centred his attention on the play. Dunn made a hit over Hitchcock's head and got safely to first, but when he tried to steal second a little later, he found Stevens ready to put the ball on him as he slid for the base.

"That knee ball is your best card," said Lane, as Pierce, pulling his sweater over his pitching arm, settled down upon the bench. "Now for a run to give 'em a scare, and I'll be satisfied."

Ray went bravely in, determined to make a hit. The first ball pitched was called a strike; the next one he hit foul; on the third he guessed wrong

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again, and retired in disgust, growling at himself and the umpire. Flanagan's high fly to centre field was gathered in by Reynolds. With two out there was but little chance of the desired run, yet Hitchcock tapped a gentle roller along the third-base line and scampered away for first as if he had made a home run. The Westcott third-baseman ran in for the ball, saw that it was foul, and stopped. Just then the ball veered across the line and became fair. Emery was safe.

It was Jeff's turn at bat. He wanted to make a hit, but he wanted first to see Hitchcock safe at second. Dunn saved him anxiety by giving him a wide out. As Hitchcock did not stir, the pitcher tried another of the same kind. "Two balls." At the next one, which was low, Jeff struck and missed it. Vane threw to second, but his throw came high in the air. While the baseman was bringing the ball down, Emery swung in from behind, and got his hand on the base.

Then came Jeff's opportunity. With a good square drive he lined the ball out over shortstop's head into the uncovered field. Emery dug his spikes into the ground, turned third without looking round, and took a needless slide to the

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plate, as the returning ball bounced into Dunn's hands. Pierce, striking out, left Jeff at second.

This beginning seemed promising. Convinced that still better things were to come, the Newbury spectators settled back in anticipation of a safely interesting game, in which the margin of the leaders would gradually increase. But Dunn now steadied down to his work, and for two innings not a man on either side got beyond second-base.

"It would be remarkable if no more runs were made," observed the sanguine Mr. Richards, as Newbury took the field at the opening of the fourth. "One to nothing is the best score possible, is it not?"

"Too good for these teams. They'll begin to make errors soon, and then the runs will come," Mr. Haven answered.

Lane had the same feeling. He gave the Newbury players as they left the bench the excellent advice to play carefully, keep their heads, and not go to pieces if some one made an error; but his expectations reached no further than a hope that the errors when they came would not be costly and would be matched by others on the Westcott side. Perkins struck an easy one to

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Stevens which the Newbury shortstop fumbled and threw wide to Ray when it was too late to catch the runner at first. It required a spectacular leap on the part of the first-baseman to save the ball. Pierce, having got two strikes on Dunn, was carried away by an ambition to strike his rival out. He sent in a straight ball over the plate which the batsman met squarely and drove hard over third-base. It was a beautiful hit that brought the Westcott cheerers to their feet with a roar, and sent the Newbury left-fielder sprinting backward toward the distant bleachers. Dunn sped round the bases, his ears delighting in the shouts of "home run!" that reached him from his coachers, his muscles straining to make the promise good. Pritchard's quick chase and sharp return to Hitchcock forced the runner back to third.

Dunn was still standing there, breathing hard, when Tracy lifted the first ball pitched to left field. As it touched Pritchard's hands, Dunn broke for the plate. The Newbury left-fielder threw to Hitchcock, who drove the ball homeward with all the speed of which he was capable. The throw came low. Jeff knelt beside the plate to receive it, and as the ball struck his mitt, Dunn's

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HE HELD THE BALL AND BLOCKED DUNN OFF FROM THE PLATE.
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spikes tore through his leg pads and cut into the flesh of his thigh; but he held the ball and blocked Dunn off from the plate. Half a minute after this double play, Vane's high foul dropped into Ray's hands.

The Newbury players trooped in jubilant at their escape from a dire predicament at the cost of a single run, and eager to know how much Jeff was hurt.

"It's just a scratch," answered the catcher, lightly, though he felt the blood creeping down his knee.

Lane caught him by the arm. "Wait a minute!" he said. "I want to see that scratch." Then turning to Pierce, who was deliberately choosing his bat, he snapped out: "Get into the box as soon as you can and wait it out! Dunn's winded by that run, and he'll be wild for a while; he'll pass one or two of you if you'll only let him." —"Now, Richards, let's have a look at that scratch."

Lane led Jeff into the players' quarters and examined the wounded leg. Pleased with the opportunity to put into practice on his own responsibility some of the lessons which he had been

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learning, the medical student produced from a pocket case the necessary supplies and bound up the ugly gash with a skill that promised well for his future usefulness in the world. Then bidding Jeff to keep moving so as to prevent the leg from stiffening, he gave his attention once more to the game.

Pierce had been passed to first, as Lane had foretold. Stevens, who followed him, reached the critical point of three balls and two strikes, and also took his base, pushing Pierce on to second. By this time Dunn was worried. Determined at all cost to avoid further pitching errors, he gave the new batsman too good a chance, and Pritchard smashed a hot two-bagger to the right of second which advanced Stevens to third and carried Pierce across the plate. Browne sent a long fly to centre field on which Stevens scored and Pritchard took third when the Westcott fielder foolishly threw home. Then, with a man on third and one out, when any kind of a rap seemed likely to let Pritchard in, Williams offered weakly at two impossible balls and stood still while a third cut the centre of the plate. Ray sent a fly to the Westcott shortstop.

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"That Williams is the limit," exclaimed Lane, roughly. "He could bat as well with his back to the plate!"

"But he can field," answered Miller. "We can't get along without him."

"One out and a man all ready to come in! A lead of three runs might mean something. Two in a game like this is nothing at all."

"I guess it's enough to win," said Miller, hopefully.

This hope the coach cherished through the fifth, as he watched three men on either side go down in order; but at the end of the sixth, when Hawke, helped out by two hits and a sacrifice, had scored a run, while three Newbury men again failed to reach first, his courage ebbed. Pierce, too, began to feel the strain; he opened the seventh by hitting Vane on the shoulder. The umpire motioned the batsman to first, whence he advanced to second, when Reynolds struck to Pierce. The Newbury pitcher slipped as he made the stop, and fell at full length; but he succeeded, none the less, in snapping the ball within Ray's reach. Vane was ambitious. Taking a long lead off second-base, he started for third as Pierce drew back

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his hand for his second pitch to Silverton, and reached his destination a fraction of a second before Emery tagged him. The Westcott coachers now gave the signal for a squeeze play, and Silverton was lucky enough to hit the ball out towards Williams. Of course, the batsman was out, but Vane had come in with the tying run. Then Hitchcock failed to get a hot grounder which Banks drove at him, and it began to look as if the Newbury team were rising into the air.

"Ball One!" The umpire's explosive call was greeted by a yell from the Westcott benches. Shorty Gray was going to get his base on balls! "Ball Two!" The Westcott whoop rose again, dwindled, and was lost in a volley from the Newbury section. Banks had tried to steal second and was caught a yard from the bag by the catcher's straight throw.

Newbury accomplished nothing in the second half of the inning to offset the gain which Westcott had made, though two men were left on bases at the third out. Williams again performed his pantomime, striking like a girl at anything Dunn chose to offer. Gray, in his turn, waited patiently for balls, and got strikes, while the two men who followed him were thrown out at first.

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Jeff came to the plate in the eighth, hoping to achieve something toward saving the game. A clean hit over shortstop's head gave him his base; it would have carried him on to second had not his stiffening thigh made him fearful to take chances. Pierce struck under a straight ball and raised a fly which Silverton caught. Stevens squirmed into an in-curve and was sent to first by the umpire. Pritchard put a scratch hit over Tracy's head. The bases were full.

"We ought to get something out of this, with only one gone," said Miller, looking into Lane's face for encouragement.

Lane made no comment; his eyes were riveted on the pitcher. The Newburyites were calling fiercely for a hit. Mr. Richards was feeling very tired and very anxious and longing for the end. Browne, who was at bat, knew what was expected from him and nerved himself for the encounter. The first ball was a tempter, but the batsman was not tempted; he smote the plate with his bat and squared himself once more. At the next one he swung hard; the ball struck the ground a dozen feet from the plate and shot away. It looked like a clean hit, but Dunn bounded to one side, took

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the ball in his glove, steadied himself, and threw to Vane at the plate. Wheeling instantly, Vane drove hard to first. The inning was over, and the score still remained three to three.

"Hard luck!" commented Lane, cool as ever. "Two inches wider and we should have had two runs!"

"It will go to extra innings, don't you think so?" queried Miller, anxiously.

"I'm afraid not," answered the expert. "They seem to be getting on to our friend Pierce."

Yet when Dunn went out on a fly to Stevens at the opening of the ninth, Miller began to hope that his adviser was mistaken. Tracy got to first by a short hit past Williams, and the courage of the coach dropped a notch. It fell still farther when Tracy stole second, Pierce's low pitch coming so awkwardly that Jeff could not get the ball away in time. Then Vane made a bunt, and Tracy advanced to third. On the next pitch Vane scurried for second. Williams, who was watching Tracy at third and thought he was starting for home, cut in and took Jeff's throw; but Tracy, who had merely feinted, scrambled back in safety to third, where he stood in triumph, knocking the dust from his trousers and jeering at Pierce.

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"Now for the third-second throw!" exclaimed Lane, suddenly leaping to his feet and holding his hand high in the air. Ray caught the signal and lifted his mitt; Richards's mitt went up in response. Pierce sent in a good out, and Jeff shot the ball to third. Tracy dived back to safety, but Hitchcock did not try to tag him; instead, he lined the ball to Stevens at second. Stevens caught Vane two yards off the base, — then seeing that Tracy had started for home, hurled at Richards. Schoolboys are not professionals, and "hurl" better describes Stevens's effort than "throw." The ball came high, apparently beyond all possibility of recovery. Jeff leaped with all his might, stretched his arm to its fullest extent, stopped the ball with his mitt, clutched it with his uncovered hand as it fell, and dropped beside the plate to receive Tracy's slide squarely on the old wound. He rolled over with a moan, and his face was twisted with pain, but the ball remained clutched tightly in his hand.

The umpire's arm snapped outward in signal that the runner was out; the players trooped in from the field overjoyed at the unexpected release from defeat, and again hopeful. Reynolds, who

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had been the first to come to the help of the prostrate catcher, with the assistance of the umpire, got Jeff upon his feet, but surrendered him then to the care of his own friends. Ray took one arm of the injured man across his shoulder, while Pierce put himself in a corresponding position on the other side. Together they supported him to the bench. The words which his bearers poured into his ears should have brought color to the catcher's white cheeks, but deathly faint as he was, and struggling hard to keep his senses, Jeff barely heard them, much less interpreted the din in the grand-stand where his classmates howled and stamped and danced minutes long. Near the bench Lane stood waiting. He threw a sharp glance at the drawn, colorless face, bade Pierce and Ray lay their burden on the ground, snipped with pocket scissors the fastenings of the trousers at the knee, and gazed ruefully at the blood-soaked bandage.

On the ground Jeff felt better. He looked up into the grave face above him and asked faintly, "I'll be all right in a few minutes, don't you think so?"

Lane made no reply. Instead, he drew Miller apart and demanded, "Who's up next?"

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"Williams," replied the coach, with averted face.

"If you put that dub in again," blurted Lane, savagely, "you'll throw your game! It's a shame to treat the boys so after what they have done!"

"It'll go to ten innings and we'll need him in the field."

The frown on Lane's face deepened. "Who's going to do your catching in the tenth?" he demanded, grinding his heel savagely into the turf.

"Why, Richards, I suppose. He'll go through on his grit."

"Oh, he'll work till he drops, there's no doubt about that, but it's wicked to let him try it."

The coach threw a doubting glance over his shoulder and beheld Mr. Richards standing in evident anxiety at Jeff's side. The sight was a far better argument than anything Lane's wisdom could supply. There was no hope of forcing Richards back into the game with his brother at hand to interpose his veto.

"It's your last chance," insisted Lane. "You win now or not at all."

"Who is to go in for Williams?" asked Miller, suddenly.

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"That solid chap that hit so well when I pitched for the practice on Thursday. Is his name Weeks?"

Miller yielded. It was high time that the decision was reached, for the umpire had already demanded a batter, and Williams was already on his way to the plate. As the coach called Williams back, Lane turned to Weeks.

"You're going in to make a hit. Don't get light-headed, but behave just as you did when I pitched for you at the net. When you see a good one, clout it. You can hit him."

Weeks seized his bat and hurried away. The first ball that Dunn pitched looked as good as any Lane had ever offered him at the net. So he smashed at it as he had been directed, and, to his great delight, drove it to centre field. From first he crept gradually round to third, though at the cost of outs by Ray and Flanagan. Meantime Lane had finished rebandaging the lacerated leg, and Mr. Richards had declared peremptorily that Jeff was not to think of entering the game again. The three watched with straining eyes as Emery Hitchcock came up to the plate, each longing for the improbable, and each with his own reason for

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anxiety as to the outcome. Jeff knew well the weakness of Skillen, the substitute catcher. Mr. Richards felt the weight of his brother's disappointment, and Lane feared for the success of his strategy.

So little Hitchcock, as forlorn hope, stood crouching over the plate, his bat clutched well up on the handle, his eyes glued on the ball in Dunn's hands, while silence fell on the noise-makers in the pavilion. The ball chugged in Vane's mitt. "Ball One!" Another pitch came twisting by the plate; the crouching figure did not stir. "Ball Two!" Then, as Dunn sent in a straight one close by the batsman's shoulder, Emery came to life. He stepped back and swung his bat horizontally against it. Silverton at third jumped into the air but his glove only ticked the flying sphere. The tense silence of the Newbury section was broken by a frantic roar which burst forth as if by signal, as the quiet surface of the sea suddenly opens above a discharged mine. Emery sped away to first, Weeks trotted in with his run, the umpire's hand shot into the air, and his voice cried, "Game!" — but no one of the maniacs who were streaming over the parapet with wild gestures of delight gave it

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heed. They needed no proclamation to know when the game was won.

Carried away by the excitement, Jeff had scrambled to his feet, but a strong hand pulled down one of his waving arms, and a sharp command cut short his yell of triumph. "Quit that! If I have to bandage that leg again, I'll charge you ten dollars!"

A twinge of pain sapped Jeff's enthusiasm. "We've won the cup!" he gasped, as he leaned heavily on the outstretched arm.

"I know," answered Lane, "and you've done your part toward winning it, but I won't stand for any antics. Lie down and wait till Perrin gets back with his auto."

He stretched Jeff on the ground again and stood guard over him, emitting occasional chuckles and grinning with pure joy. "It was a great game, wasn't it?" he asked, as Miller came up to thank him for his potent help. "I haven't had so good a time for six months."

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The score:—

NEWBURY

	AB	R	BH	TB	PO	A	E
Ray, 1b	5	0	2	2	10	0	0
Flanagan, cf	5	0	1	1	1	0	0
Hitchcock, 3b	5	1	2	2	1	3	1
Richards, c	4	0	2	2	8	4	0
Pierce, p	3	1	0	0	0	2	0
Stevens, ss	2	1	0	0	3	2	1
Pritchard, lf	4	0	2	3	1	1	0
Browne, rf	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Williams, 2b	3	0	0	0	3	3	0
Weeks,*	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Totals	36	4	10	11	27	15	2

WESTCOTT'S

Hawke, 2b	4	1	1	1	2	4	1
Perkins, lf	4	1	0	0	1	0	0
Dunn, p	4	0	3	5	0	3	0
Tracy, 1b	4	0	1	1	10	0	0
Vane, c	3	1	1	1	7	1	0
Reynolds, cf	3	0	0	0	2	0	0
Silverton, 3b	3	0	0	0	2	2	0
Banks, rf	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
Gray, ss	2	0	0	0	1	2	0
Totals	29	3	6	8	26†	12	1

*Batted for Williams in the ninth.
†Winning run scored with two out.

Innings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Newbury	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	—4
Westcott's	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	—3

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CHAPTER XXV

CONCLUSION

The transcript of a letter will bring my tale to a close. Through the influence of Mr. Haven, who stood high in the counsels of the club, Jeff had secured the post of caretaker for the summer of an Appalachian hut, situated high up in the Presidential Range of the White Mountains. His duties were to keep the hut in order and to keep order in the hut, collect the fees from the climbers, who used the shelter as they journeyed over the range, and provide necessary firewood. Two or three times each week he tramped down the four-mile path to the inn in the valley, taking a plunge in a retired pool by the way, and returning with news from the world and a rucksack heavy with supplies. One day late in August the clerk at the inn gave him a letter bearing a Canadian stamp and addressed in a familiar dashing hand. Jeff glanced at it and put it in his pocket. When he had passed the mile mark on the return journey,

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and the twenty pounds in his pack had begun to feel like forty, he swung his burden to the ground, sat down on the trunk of a tree which had fallen across the path, and opened his letter. It was from Jack.

"I know all about that Westcott game," it began. "I sent to Boston for two papers for the day after the game, and both had accounts of it. It relieved my mind a lot to know that you won out, and that my absence didn't make any difference. Sorry about your getting spiked, though I don't believe the scratch of a spike will lay you up for life. I always said you could catch.

"I'm up here in British Columbia working like a dog. I came straight to Vancouver from Boston and got a job with a lumber company right off the bat. I'm in with the management, and I mean to keep in, but you never could guess how they came to discover in me so quickly the germ of a captain of industry. Lacrosse is the great game in all parts of Canada, but there are a lot of people here from the States, and they still cling to baseball. On the Fourth the lumber company sent a nine down into the town in the valley to play a game. A discarded minor-leaguer who works in

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one of the sawmills did our pitching, and I put up a fine front behind the bat, pulling off a three-base hit with the bases full, and winning the game. One of the men 'high up' is a baseball crank and made inquiries about me. He gave me a boost right off, and if words mean anything, there's something ahead of me if I stick to the job long enough to learn the business. I've written to my father, and he's half promised to send me some money to invest. If he doesn't, I'll get along without it, but I'm going to make good in some way, or move on to where I can.

"So you see I wasn't so wild as you thought when I broke away from home, though I acknowledge that my method of doing it might have been improved on. I should have gone to the dogs if I had entered college, and hanging round a broker's office would have been worse. There's a mad streak in me that can only be cured by hard work, and I have that here good and plenty. I haven't touched a drop of anything stronger than coffee since I saw you — and I don't mean to, either — the coffee is strong enough, Heaven knows! But, Jeff, this is a great country! It's just the place for scrappy football players. 'Go West, young man,'

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is no good any more. 'Go Northwest' will do for a few years yet, but if you're thinking of coming out here, you don't want to wait long or you'll find the orange squeezed. I've got a finger on it myself.

"Write me about the graduation and what the fellows are doing, and if my luck continues good, I'll answer. Go and see my mother when you get a chance, and let her talk to you about me. It will do her a lot of good.

"Affectionately,

"JACK GRAHAM."

Jeff read the letter twice and then slid down to the ground, leaned his back against the log, and meditated. A squirrel scolded at him from the limbs above his head; a lumbering hedgehog humped across the path a dozen feet away; he took no interest in the movements of either. His thoughts were with his friend in the far-away Northwest. Could Jack keep straight in the rough, fierce life of the frontier? Jeff hoped so, believed so. The great world, with its lessons and opportunities, stretched far beyond the little circle of school honors and dishonors, of baseball games and Bankart prizes. The wisdom which

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the school had failed to teach him Jack Graham might yet learn through the stern discipline of life.

"I'll bet he makes good!" muttered Jeff, as he swung his burden to his shoulders and faced the hill again. "He's got it in him."

THE END

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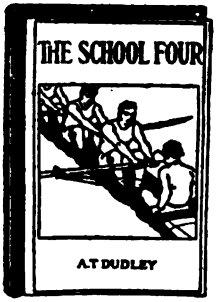

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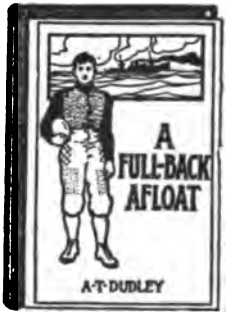

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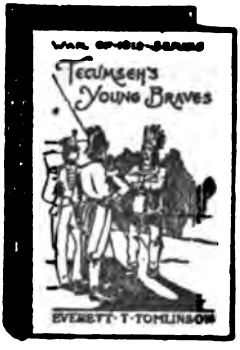

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